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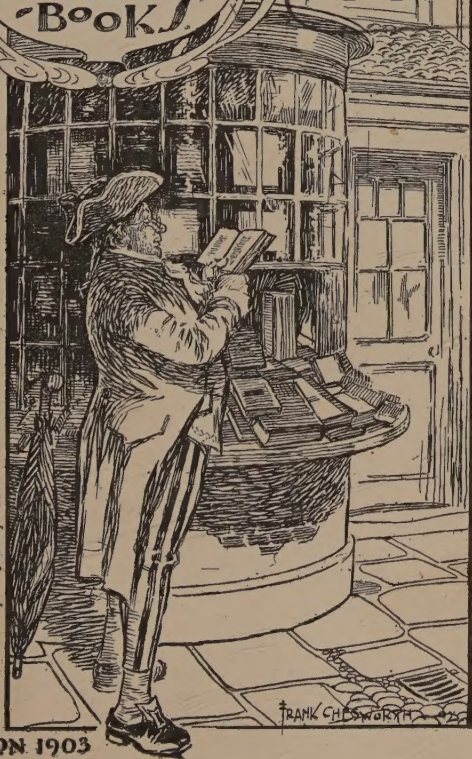
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**A BOOK
ABOUT
BOOKS**

BY **ROBERT
BLATCHFORD.**

**THE
CLARION
PRESS
72
FLEET
ST.
E.C.**

LONDON 1903



TO THE
REV. J. CARTMELL ROBINSON
VICAR OF HOXTON

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OF BOOKS ABOUT BOOKS

I

WHAT literary pope is responsible for the bull by whose authority "books about books" are excommunicate?

Is the damnatory edict older than Montaigne? It is, at anyrate, as old for in his essay, "Of Experience," Montaigne says—

"There is more ado to interpret interpretations than to interpret things; and more books upon books than upon any other subject; we do nothing but comment upon one another. Every place swarms with commentaries; of authors there is great scarcity."

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The evil that men write, lives after them. This, which Montaigne said in his haste, many a callow ready-writer repeats glibly at his leisure, and a commodity of yea-forsooth cynics, fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils, now scrawl flagrantly above the portals of one of the most tranquil and leafy by-ways of *belles lettres* the sour legend, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

Nevertheless, fear not, gentle reader. Let our latter-day Zál and Rustum bluster as they will, but heed not thou.

With us along the strip of herbage strown,
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of pope and pressman is forgot,
And peace to Montaigne on his purple throne.

To return to the knight of Bordeaux. That is a quaint distinction which he implies. Of commentators there are swarms ; of authors great scarcity ! A commentator, then, is not an author. He who interprets placket holes, devil worship, the Scandinavian mythus, or

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the reasons why monks love to be in kitchens, is free of the literary guild ; he who interprets books is outside benefit of clergy ; even the hospitable Montaigne has slammed the door in his face, and the literary whippersnapper, who retails the wooden nutmegs of his imagination as the delectable spice of fiction, or ekes out a harmful unnecessary existence by scribbling impertinences about society big-wigs, has stabbed the poor outcast with the leathern dagger of his wit, or shot him flying with a paper bullet of the brain.

You may rip your quill to the feather over small-beer chronicles, write sonnets to your mistress's eyebrow, babble of green fields, extract metaphysical moonshine from green cucumbers, split the ears of the groundlings with windy passions, wash out human nature's dirty linen in the market-place, or clog Fleet Ditch with "the spawn of the press on the follies of the hour," and be the

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classic of a season ; ay, and have your foibles chronicled in *M.A.P.*, and your seven ages of portraiture blazoned in the sixpenny magazines. But, though you speak in books about books with the tongues of men and angels, it shall avail you nothing. An angel you may be, but you shall be written down, as Shelley was by Matthew Arnold, as "an ineffectual angel, beating in the void your luminous wings in vain." Nay, is it not possible that Solomon in all his glory has been misreported, and that what he actually said was, "Of making books about books there is no end."

But, what the good year! Are we men, or mice? Shall we, being free-born British bookmakers, writers of books about books, allow a dead Frenchman to come betwixt the wind and our nobility? Shall the excellent *Sieur de Montaigne*, who wrote of books himself, and, to speak brotherly of him, sometimes wrote of them but dully, stand,

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like an awful constable on point duty, and with the raised arm of authority invidiously halt our chariot only, under plea of regulating public traffic? I say no. I will, like the eloquent counsel of Mrs. Bardell, "appeal to an enlightened, a high-minded, a right-feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathising, a contemplative jury of my fellow-countrymen."

There can be but one sound reason for avoiding a book about books, and that is because the book is not a good one—a reason that will serve equally well for avoiding what Oliver Wendell Holmes calls "broken-winded novels, and spavined verses." If Montaigne disliked the commentators of his time, we may be sure they deserved it, and it is no part of my case to defend every fusty pedant and prosy bore who may, in past times, have misused some honest author by thumping him like a "drum ecclesiastic," or have wearied an unwilling

congregation with his tedious homilies. There are, I admit, amongst the higher ranks of English literature, several captains of renown whose solemn and authoritative utterances on books might be lost or burned without serious check to the gaiety of nations. That delightful old humbug, Fadladeen, who serves as comic interlude between the scenes in *Lalla Rookh*, is the very type of the literary bore in a full-bottomed wig who trampled with elephantine feet all over some poet's garden, measuring dimensions with his land-surveyor's chain, pompously declaring that Shakespeare was longer, Spenser broader, this more oval, that more square, and neither conformable to the classic pattern of Horace or of Virgil. No reader, no writer, will trouble about the mensuration of these robustious, periwig-pated, queer old fogies. It is not the dimensions of the garden, but the colour and perfume of the flowers that we prize. And why

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may not you, or I, or he, or she, loiter awhile in some shady walk, or rest a little in some musky arbour, or, plucking a rose for our own pleasure, call to a friend to mark its beauty?

Shall we read *Hamlet*, *Sartor*, *Elia*, *Prometheus*, or *The Faery Queen*, and ne'er say grace for them? By whose authority or on whose command? And where is the writer, or when was there one, who could feel keenly, see gladly, love deeply, and never speak his thanks? Such a writer would be a brave monster indeed, and might as well carry his eyes in his tail. For it is at once the fault and the merit of the literary soul that it must kiss and tell. A writer, and never to write of his books! Why, then, ere long we shall have a lover who will not speak of his mistress.

Of all the cants that ever were canted, this cant about books is the cantiest. What is the equity of the case? He who writes ill shall not be read, although

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his discourse be of man's dearest hopes and sweetest dreams: he who writes beautifully may take a broomstick for his text, and on it by sheer witchery carry us whither he list; should he upbraid, we'll own that he prevail; say that he frown, we'll say his looks we view as morning roses newly dipped in dew. So that he find us dainties, what do we care whether the dainties be bred in a book or plucked from a Persian garden? Be his lamp old or new, what odds if by rubbing it he can raise a genie?

If Dean Swift had leave to write an essay on a broomstick, and Cowper orders to sing the sofa; if Gilbert White could pen picturesque and melodious passages about clay soils; if Sir Thomas Browne's magic could vivify dead bones, warm monuments to life and passion, and conjure beauty out of ashes; if Sterne could be eloquent over a dead donkey; and if Thomas Carlyle could

build a masterpiece of wisdom and satire upon the philosophy of clothes, are we to believe that all the heaped riches of the world's *El Dorado* of thought will afford neither gold nor gems for literary lapidaries to work on?

As an old pressman, trained to predatory forays after "copy," I should say of our libraries, as Blucher said of London, "Was fur plunder." If there be no copy in the world's books, there is none in the myriads of cloth-bound human documents called mankind, nor in all their being, doing, and suffering: between the storied earth and unread heavens, and from Dan to Beersheba, all is barren. If an author have so little feeling of his business that he can only fret but not play upon the pipes of other men; if in a golden text he cannot find change for a silver sermon, he may, as Mark Twain said, conclude that he was intended by Nature for sawing logs, "and may retire with dignity

and assume his heaven-appointed vocation."

Besides, who can control his fate? Such men as Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Matthew Arnold could no more deny themselves and us the joy of writing about books, than could Gilbert White or Richard Jeffries remain dumb when the blackcap sang, or the swallows flew, or the pollen of summer flowers danced in the "sweet briar wind."

You may bid a bookmaker stand in the prince's name; but how if a' will not stand?

A man writes books about books because he loves books; he reads books about books for the same excellent reason. He avoids books about books because he does not love books, or because he flatters himself that none can tell him anything new about the books he has read. In the first case his infirmity entitles him to our pity; in the second case his vanity will be his

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own punishment. For who has read every book worth reading, or has seen in any one book all that may be seen?

The humblest searcher on the literary shore may chance upon some hitherto undiscovered gem, or, turning one long-known lovingly about, may surprise us with strange hues or rays of beauty. Since no man ever yet looked at an author with another's eyes, who shall hold himself wise beyond the reach of any commentator's later reading?

Moreover, books about books are not written wholly for the inner brotherhood of the elect. Outside the shining circles are busy crowds of mere human beings who do not know everything, who have not read everything, who have not had time to make a special study of literature, and so are glad of a hint, and hold themselves favoured when they are given an introduction to some new and pleasant literary friend.

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And we may tell him who bids us avoid books about books, that no man can have authority to speak on literary subjects until he has read what the standard critics have written about the standard authors. And he who is a master of literature is so by virtue of his knowledge of literature, a valuable part of which knowledge he must owe to books about books. For there lives no man to-day who was born so wise or clever that he could learn nothing about books from Johnson, Dryden, Goethe, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Emerson, Lowell, Ruskin, Heine, Pater, Carlyle, Tolstoy, Matthew Arnold, and St. Beuve. The literary essays of these men, and of others, like Leigh Hunt, Thackeray, Macaulay, and Poe, have seen many an original work to the trunkmaker's; and how many latter-day novels, poems, and biographies now strutting their brief hour would a judicious reader give room upon his

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shelves at the expense of these great commentators?

“Avoid books about books!” Then must we avoid Sir Philip Sidney’s jewelled *Apology for Poetry*, Charles Lamb’s *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*, Edgar Allan Poe’s *Poetic Principle*, and a whole legion of other radiant children of love and genius, any one of whom could be as ill-spared from our literature as a bright star from a constellation.

Why ban books as subjects for books? Are they not fertile fields? Are they not pregnant, suggestive, rich in interest and variety? May not a good writer by good hap find as fair inspiration for an essay in *Religio Medici*, or the *Inferno*, as in *The Resemblance of Children to their Parents*?

When a man writes to us of “Falstaff,” or “Becky Sharp,” or “Esmeralda,” does he not talk to us of our own friends? We love to talk about our

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friends ; we love to talk about our books ; we love to read books about books. To deny it is mere affectation. Of course, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If your book about books is doughy, heavy, sour, and scant of plums, it is a dish to be avoided. There are comedies which do not amuse, tragedies which do not thrill, novels over which Oblivion scattereth her poppies with relentless hand ; and there are books about books whose wit and charm, vivacity, and wisdom delight one like a conversation with a clever and beautiful woman, or a gay and tender melody well sung.

Could we afford to lose Coleridge's essays on Shakespeare, or Lamb's ? Could we spare Lowell, or Emerson ; or Carlyle's papers on Burns, Johnson, Goethe, and the German playwrights ? No. And amongst our books on books the work of recent writers is often charming. Who does

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not enjoy the literary articles in Stevenson's *Men and Books*, *Memories and Portraits*, and *Virginibus*?

II

A short time ago, happening upon a book of Mr. Augustine Birrell's, and finding the first dive yield pearls, I bought four volumes of his, all about books, and read the whole four twice through inside a week. These articles, in *Obiter Dicta* and *Res Judictae*, pleased me more than most novels, and held me as closely. They are bright, light, clever, good-natured; full of book knowledge, and sparkling with wit and fancy. Suppose I avoided books about books, what a treat I should have lost! But my rule is always to read books about books when they are readable; and I have my reward, which is the permission of the kind public to write books about

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books in my turn, and to sell them if I can.

Mr. Birrell is lavish of good things. He would "rather be knocked down by Dr. Johnson than be picked up by Mr. Froude." He says, contrasting Lamb's dutiful conduct with what he aptly calls "the bottled moonshine" of Coleridge's philosophy—

In these days of champagne and shoddy, of display of teacups and rotten foundations . . . it becomes plain that the real wants of the age are not analyses of religious belief, nor discussions as to whether persons or streams of tendency are the apter words to describe God by ; but a steady supply of honest, plain-sailing men who can be safely trusted with small sums.

That is good sense as well as good wit, and so is the following extract from *The Office of Literature*—

Self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment, and the author who would confer pleasure must possess the art, or know the trick, of destroying for the time the reader's own per-

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sonality. Undoubtedly, the easiest way of doing this is by the creation of a host of rival personalities — hence the number and the popularity of novels. Whenever a novelist fails, his book is said to flag ; that is, the reader suddenly (as in skating) comes down bump upon his own personality, and curses the unskilful author. No lack of characters and continual motion is the easiest recipe for a novel, which, like a beggar, should always be kept “moving on.” Nobody knew this better than Fielding, whose novels, like most good ones, are full of inns.

If that is a kind of writing to be avoided, how many kinds are there worthy to be sought?

Stevenson said, “We cannot write like Hazlitt,” and Mr. Birrell speaks of Hazlitt’s “sparkling pages.” I think Stevenson wrote better than Hazlitt, and that there is more sparkle in *Obiter Dicta* than in any of Hazlitt’s essays of like scope. Perhaps I am wrong ; but let us be honest, and let us not be blindly reverent to the dead

and "slowly wise and meanly just" to men of our own day. A living author gets more pleasure out of a silver compliment than a dead author gets out of a golden panegyric. Halliday Sparling's essay on Defoe in the Scott Library edition of *Captain Singleton* seems to me as useful and as charming as any of Dryden's prefaces.

An author is not necessarily a lion because he is dead, nor a dog because he is alive. And every dog has his day. I never could see why a good man should be denied his due for no reason better than that he did not die two centuries before he was born. The fame of Ben Jonson should not so dazzle our eyes that we cannot see the glory of our own singers. Addison's style was good, but I like Matthew Arnold's better; Blackmore's prose is as unique as Goldsmith's; and no prose writer in English literature can

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rival the splendour and the power of Carlyle.

Avoid books about books ! I wonder what I owe to such books. I wonder what I owe to Leigh Hunt for giving me, a long, long time ago, my first glimpse of the artistic side of literature. Is there anything of Kipling's more excellent than his fanciful account of how Shakespeare came to write *The Tempest*?

But let us try other dishes. Shall I help you to a slice of Lamb?

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a *book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of books which are no books—*biblia a-biblia*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards (bound and lettered on the back), Scientific Treatises, Almanacs, Statutes at large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be with-

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out"; the *History of Flavius Josephus* (that learned Jew), and Paley's *Moral Philosophy*. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these things in book's clothing perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume and hope it some kind-hearted play-book; then, opening what seem its leaves, to come bolt upon a withering population essay. To expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of block-headed encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitans), set out in an array of russia or morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably reclothe my shivering folios, would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymond Lully to look like himself again in the world. I never see these impostors but I long to strip them, to clothe my ragged veterans in their spoils.

How now, gossips? Is not that good book talk? Does it not smack of litera-

ture and Latin and the humanities? How the personality of Charles Lamb stands out as he lingers lovingly over his ragged veterans. We can see there the old tomes, grown shabby with good service, and the grave well-featured face of Elia, with its bright eyes clouded thoughtfully, as he thinks how he would like to dress his darlings in all the bravery of russia leather and gold lettering. The man who does not wish he could see Lamb's library and shake the public benefactor Elia by the hand, is the man to avoid books about books. The motions of his soul are black as Erebus; let no such man be trusted. Such a person is capable of sending copy to an editor without stamps for its return; even perhaps, at the lowest levels of his perfidy, of reading Thomas à Kempis at the breakfast-table. One shudders to think of such a being. The awful possibilities of human wickedness should make us humble.

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Let us change our author now, and hear Carlyle wax eloquent over the value of memoirs—

Samuel Johnson, or perhaps another, used to say there was no man on the street whose biography he would not like to be acquainted with. No rudest mortal walking there who has not seen and known experimentally something, which, could he tell it, the wisest would hear willing from him! Nay, after all that can be said and celebrated about poetry, eloquence, and the higher forms of composition and utterance, is not the primary use of speech the same, to utter *memoirs*, that is, memorable experiences, to our fellow-creatures? A fact is a fact; man is for ever the brother of man. That thou, O! my brother, impart to me truly how it stands with thee in that inner man of thine, what lively images of things past thy memory has painted there, what hopes, what thoughts, affections, knowledges do now dwell there: for this and for no other object that I can see was the gift of speech and hearing bestowed on us two.

Is not that worth reading? And when the grim sage is in a mood more playful,

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is his work a kind to shun—to avoid? Hear him on his duty as a revenue watchman guarding our coasts against bad plays “made in Germany”—

For not only are we stationed on the coast of the country as watchers and spials, to report whatsoever remarkable thing becomes visible in the distance; but we stand there also as a sort of tide-waiters and Preventative-service men, to contend, with our utmost vigour, that no improper article be landed. These offices, it would seem, as in the material world, so also in the literary and spiritual, usually fall to the lot of aged, invalided, impoverished, or otherwise decayed persons: but this is little to the matter. As true British subjects, with ready will, though it may be with our last strength, we are here to discharge that double duty. Movements, we observe, are making along the beach, and signals out seawards, as if these Klingemanns and Müllners were to be landed on our soil; but through the strength of Heaven this shall not be done till “the most thinking people” know what it *is* that is landing.

Now, for another change, get down your *Roundabout Papers* and read “On

a Lazy Idle Boy," and "On a Peal of Bells," for I have not room to quote them; and also you may refresh your recollections of Thackeray's lectures on Swift and Congreve. Meanwhile I will remind you how Robert Louis Stevenson contrived to chat delightfully about *Robinson Crusoe*—

It was the scene of Crusoe at the wreck, if I remember rightly, that so bewitched my blacksmith. Nor is the fact surprising. Every single article the castaway recovers from the hulk is a "joy for ever" to the man who reads of them. They are the things that should be found, and the bare enumeration stirs the blood. . . . There are few people who have not groaned under the plethora of goods that fell to the lot of the *Swiss Family Robinsons*, that dreary family. They found article after article, creature after creature, from milk kine to pieces of ordnance, a whole consignment; but no informing taste had presided over the selection, there was no smack or relish in the invoice, and these riches left the fancy cold.

They did. I remember how they left

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my fancy cold. Yet the book was popular, and is no doubt quite good enough for readers who cannot endure books about books. It is perhaps of such fellows as these our Stevenson was thinking when in his article on Walt Whitman he spoke of the poet's task in the following eloquent passage—

He has to electrify his readers into an instant unflagging activity, founded on a wide and eager observation of the world, and make them direct their ways by superior prudence, which has little or nothing in common with the maxims of the copy-book. That many of us lead such lives as they would heartily disown after two hours' serious reflection on the subject is, I am afraid, a true, and I am sure, a very galling thought. The enchanted ground of dead-alive respectability is next upon the map to the Beulah of considerate virtue. But there they all slumber and take their rest in the middle of God's beautiful and wonderful universe; the drowsy heads have nodded together in the same position since first their fathers fell asleep; and not even the sound of the last trumpet can wake them to a single

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active thought. The poet has a hard task before him to stir up such fellows to a sense of their own and other people's principles in life.

I intended quoting from Leigh Hunt, who says he loves authors who love books, and speaks of dead authors as men "who have become books"; and I meant also to borrow a few shells from the arsenals of Schlegel, St. Beuve, Bagehot, and Ruskin, with which to bombard the blockading squadron of Admiral Montaigne; but space precludes, and I must finish with a broadside from the good ship Samuel Johnson.

There is much good reading in Johnson's preface to Shakespeare, and even a book - about - book - shunning Philistine could not refuse a smile to the passage in which the Doctor seriously compares Addison and Shakespeare as dramatists, remarking, naïvely, that "Shakespeare is the most natural, Addison the most

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poetical"; but these delights the reader must seek for himself. Here is a specimen of Johnson's good sense and good writing—

Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play, from the first scene to the last, with the utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and of Pope. Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue, and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators.

There, Mr. Book-about-book-avoider. "How do you like that, my buck?" Can the makers of books about books

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write well? Have they fancy, wit, style, discretion? Are they not informing and delightful *authors*?

To draw to an end with you. All book-lovers love to read about books. Literary papers and literary columns are popular, and the best of the critics have become English classics. If you are bookish, you will read everything readable about books. Even catalogues are appetising. Johnson loved a catalogue or an index; and such things, like the odours from a kitchen, are often more relishable than the reality.

On the other hand, men who do not love books care not for books about books. And not for these are such books written. For my part, I write about books to please myself and a few of my friends, and I do it as well as my limitations and imperfections allow me, with a wise fearfulness ever before my eyes: dealing faithfully with those who

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support me, and taking pains to be just and cheerful, and to avoid dulness and slovenliness, so that *The Sun* shall not spurn me by day, neither *The Star* by night.

OF UNJUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE

Is an author justified in cutting off his heroes and heroines in the flower of their youth? Marry, no, unless he shall satisfy Crowner's 'Quest. True, he may plead that since he created them they are his own; but may a parent slay his own children and go scot-free?

Against such literary Thuggism I protest. Life, I maintain, should be as sacred in fiction as in fact. The characters in novels have rights, and the readers of novels have rights. We cannot allow the author to act judge and executioner both. We cannot allow him doctor's licence to bury his blunders. We will not suffer him, seeing not the wounds his keen knife

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makes, to kill the thing he loves (and we love) without our peeping through the blanket of the dark, to cry "Hold, hold."

The public must be protected; the slaughter of the innocents must be forbidden. We must have a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children of the Imagination.

To come to close grips. On what grounds can Thomas Hardy plead justifiable homicide in the case of Tess, or Beatrice Harraden in the case of Bernadine, or George Meredith in the case of Lucy Feveril?

The killing of Tess is flagrant: cruel. The manner of it is a literary outrage. Stern Brutus showed more ruth and delicacy when he spoke for Cæsar—

Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcase fit for hounds.

But to hang a sweet and much-wronged heroine in a county jail! To drag the

public, who loved and pitied her, out into the merciless sunshine, to watch in horrible suspense for the falling of the black flag! That is wanton : barbarous. We should be less than human did we fail to protest against the deep damnation of such taking off. Nor is the author to be lightly pardoned for allowing a loving and lovable woman to be done to death for the sake of a poor emasculated rag-doll like Angel Clare.

And why was Lucy Feveril slain? She had not injured man; she had neither sinned against Mrs. Grundy nor affronted Fate. Nor was she pursued by any dark Erinnys, from whom true art were powerless to shield her.

As for that poor little slip of a girl in *Ships That Pass*, she is brutally crushed to death by a cart, or a horse, for no offence, and for no better reason than because she and the man she loved were unfit to marry. And this revolting and inartistic crime is perpetrated by

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a woman. How shall Miss Harraden stand before us in the day of our judicial appearing?

Speaking not as a critic, but as a mere man, and leaving for a moment the rights of literary children to the protection of the public, I ask, Has the reader no just claim upon the goodwill and forbearance of an author? After helping that unhappy son of Victor Hugo's to save the wreck and fight the octopus, is it fair or kind to compel us all to sit supine and see him drowned by inches?

Shall we, having trusted a novelist, having suffered him to weave his charms about us, having swallowed confidingly his insidious spells to make us love his children, be callously betrayed and bidden to stand, like soldiers at a comrade's execution, the miserable witnesses of a fate we are powerless to avert? And shall the writer we have faith in cause us wanton pain, in order that,

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like another Pickwickian Fat Boy, he may make us "creep."

Very keenly do I remember, one winter's morning, about four o'clock, after I had given myself up to an all-night sitting with Thomas Hardy, how I sat and listened to the prison bell tolling Tess to her hanging, while the white-blooded hero knelt with her younger sister—that sister to whom he had transferred his contemptible affections—and prayed.

In the name of outraged readerdom I protest against such betrayal. We will not be so served without resentment. It is a gross breach of faith for an author to bid us warm his children in our breasts, and then to tear them shrieking from our arms and cast them to the wolves.

As a critic, I should say that the death of a lovable character is artistically criminal when not demanded by the exigencies of art. In *Romeo and*

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Juliet the whole play centres round the tragic fate of the heroine and hero. Spare the lives of the two lovers and the whole play is artistically unsound. So, when Charlotte Brontë reprieved the professor, at the end of *Villette*, she destroyed the balance and marred the construction of her novel : and she knew it. And Dickens erred in the same way when he brought Estella back to marry Pip and spoil the moral of the best-built book he gave us.

But there is no excuse for the killing of Lucy Feveril, nor Tess, nor Bernadine ; and the novels in which those injured and charming women figure would have been very much better if their heroines had been more gallantly or fatherly treated by their authors.

For instance, who has not felt a rush of indignant anger when Lorna Doone falls at the altar, shot by the black-guardly Carver ? And who will deny that her recovery is artistically and

humanely justified? To have killed Lorna would have spoiled a noble novel and exasperated millions of honest readers who understand the eternal fitness of things.

I have been provoked to this indignant fulmination by the recent reading of a novel entitled *Barbara West*, by Keighley Snowden. Forasmuch as the said Keighley Snowden has deliberately, and of malice aforethought, put to death, without fair trial or just cause, a very natural, winsome, and cunningly - contrived heroine, whose name, Barbara West, gives the title to the above-named and before-mentioned novel, therefore I, acting for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children of the Imagination, do now appear as counsel for the prosecution.

M'lud and gentlemen of the jury,—
The case of Barbara West is on similar lines to the case of Sorrell and Donni-

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thorne *v.* Adam Bede. In both cases the heroine turns from a good man to throw herself away upon a bad one, and such differences as exist are differences not of circumstances, but of character.

Arthur Donnithorne, the betrayer of Hettie Sorrell, is a gentleman; Prince Varley, the betrayer of Barbara West, is a wealthy cad. This, I admit, is a point to the disadvantage of my client. But Barbara is very young, and women too frequently mistake swagger for merit, bluster for courage, and brutality for strength. Many of the most popular heroines of fiction have displayed no better judgment than this poor girl, and I hope the jury will bear in mind the disabilities of Eve's daughters, and be lenient.

As against this flaw of taste, my client may claim a large and serious superiority over the lady in the case of Adam Bede *v.* Sorrell and Donni-

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thorne. Hettie Sorrell in her fall was actuated solely by vanity: my client was the victim of her own affectionate and trustful nature. The difference is radical: it is a moral difference. My client was both tender and lovable; Miss Sorrell was neither the one nor the other, nor the first nor the last. Hettie sold herself for vanity: Barbara West gave herself for love.

And yet Hettie Sorrell was let off with a sentence of penal servitude; while in Barbara West's case the capital sentence is enforced.

Allow me to enter into the detail of the case of my client. The points of the *Adam Bede v. Sorrell and Donni-thorne* affair are generally known, and within the cognisance of the jury.

The Adam Bede of this case is Enoch Watson, a young journalist, who is in love with Barbara West in a very pure and ideal way. But he is modest, chivalrous, and tender, and his coarse

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rival is insidious, persistent, unscrupulous, and loud.

The girl is young and unsophisticated. She finds the true lover too quiet and patient, and mistakes the showy vulgarian rogue for a gentleman. Young Watson is jealous, and despairs, and the girl is left defenceless, to match her young love and sweet tenderness against the cruel cunning of a wild beast.

The result has been confessed to the jury. After the fall, the girl is driven to seek a terrible means of escape in what the author aptly describes as "a house of cowardice."

After a fortnight she comes home "looking like a changeling." The "gentleman" has shamelessly deserted her. The true lover is sulking in his tent. And the author, whose heart should be warm with parental love and soft with manly pity, kills her.

As counsel for the Society for the

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Prevention of Cruelty to Children of the Imagination, I claim that the "hounding of this girl with stones" is not artistically justified; as a reader I protest against the pain inflicted upon us by an author who led us to expect far kinder treatment. We, as critics and as readers, loved the little, pretty, whimsical child-woman, and grieve to see her cut untimely off. That, m'lud and gentlemen of the jury, is my case.

Barbara West is a fresh, tender, and interesting story, but the reading of it made me supremely miserable for half a week, and its "awful talk and asking looks" have set me brooding over problems which I hope it will never be my province to attempt to solve.

It is as reader I protest. Why should an author harrow up our souls, if, without doing artistic violence to his work, he can make all easy to us? We go to novels, most of us, to be cheered,

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inspired, pleased. Is not the world grey enough with sorrow and drab enough with ennui; and do we not suffer losses and endure griefs sufficiently bitter, that we are to be tortured with the wrongs and disasters of men and women in the ideal world to which we fly for sweet rest and happy dreams?

When a weary traveller through this ugly and dull old Vanity Fair trips into a wine shop, jingles down a piece of gold, and asks for a bottle of bright red burgundy, and when the vintner says, "I think you will find this sound and delicate," and when the tired wayfarer sits down under the green bush and prepares to "cheer the heart that pines," and when, after smacking his lips and congratulating himself on a gay and pure vintage, he finds gall and wormwood in the last bumper, and when he wakes up in the morning with a headache and a heartache, he cannot help

feeling that the confidence which should exist between man and man has been abused.

We must have a literary "Labels Act," in virtue of which a novel shall be marked "Pure Optimism: a Light and Refreshing Story," or "Tart Cathartic Blend," or "Pessimistic Bitters, and Unavailing Tears," or "Highly-flavoured Essence of Prurience, and Weak Despair, for Degenerates Chiefly." Then we shall know what we are getting.

But to have your favoured wit and merryman suddenly fall to making mouths at the heavens, or to see your charming cantatrice whip out a hideous dagger and plunge it into her "nice warm comfortable body," just as you are shouting "Encore," is, to say the least of it, discomfoting. Let us have robust and cheerful novels, with happy endings.

Sing no more ditties, sing no more of dumps so dull and heavy.

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I feel annoyed about Barbara West. The dear little soul had done nothing to deserve her author's punishment. I can say of her, as the Queen says of poor Ophelia—

I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet
 maid,
And not have strewed thy grave.

If my poor pen were equal to the task, I would take a terrible revenge upon these recreant authors. I would write a novel in which there should be a hero, handsome as Adonis, brave as Nelson, virtuous as Tom Bowling; and a heroine amiable as Lucy, lovely as Lorna, sweet as Barbara, interesting as Bernadine; and I would cast such dazzling spells of eloquence and imagination upon the spongy atmosphere that all the ladies should fall in love with the one and all the men should fall in love with the other, and I would artfully lead up to a love-scene, sparkling with tears, radiant with smiles, palpitating with

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passion, and then, just as Miranda laid her gentle hand in Ferdinand's strong grasp, just as Ferdinand looked unutterable tenderness into Miranda's sweet grey-violet-purple-hazel-gold-browneyes, I would let some fellow in the cellarage knock out the ashes of his pipe upon a nitro-glycerine can and blow the whole three volumes into the hinterland of nowhere, leaving not a wrack behind.

And I would send advance copies of the book, with my compliments, to Miss Beatrice Harraden, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Thomas Hardy, and Mr. Keighley Snowden.

There is a point at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

OF HUMAN DOCUMENTS

ART is a good thing; but life is better. The study of books is profitable and very pleasant; but the study of men is a more excellent thing by far. Every great city is a living library; every citizen is a different volume, bound in cuticle and cased in cloth or linen. Given the opportunity and the skill to turn the leaves, the poorest tome in this animated Bodleian will yield such humour and pathos, such amazing plots and thrilling histories, such bizarre or beautiful delineation as we seldom get, even from the great masters of fiction.

The streets! are they not stages whereon unimaginable dramas are every day and every night enacted?

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Lord Beaconsfield described the legal genius as "a talent for explaining the self-evident, illustrating the obvious, and expatiating on the commonplace." The reader may accuse me of following a legal precedent. I have been writing truisms. Yes. But the obvious is not always the most generally seen. The self-evident is invisible to him who has no eyes. It is a truism to say that human life is interesting, and human nature better worth study than mere plays. But still many of us pay to witness more or less capable travesties of life at the theatres, and few of us trouble to turn our heads to notice the drama going on around us. Life and character would seem to interest none save professional observers, who study them for "copy."

The average Christian, like Miss Kilmansegg, does not seem to care for an entertainment to which he is "welcome without any ticket." Hence that

most engrossing romance—the “human document”—is little read; that noble drama of Life, in which the humour is spontaneous and the pathos true, is seldom seen.

Yet to him who has the sympathy and the eye for human nature, how trite and pale must mere novels and plays appear!

Life is an original work; a novel, or a play, is a translation. It is better to read the original, in its own language—if you can. But how if you have not the gift of tongues? A man of some imagination and sympathy finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything. But the man with no more conceit in him than's in a mallet is alone in the crowd. He cannot read romance into the life of the girl at the fruit-stall, nor feel the tragedy hidden under the shabby hat or between the sandwich boards, nor pick the humour

out of the street wrangle, nor piece together the threads of character that glint through the smoke-room argument. He finds no reverie in the lascar's eyes, no pathos in the children's laughter. There is no sky reflected in his puddles, no blue for him in the waving corn, no passion in the rose, no memory in the distant bells. He must see Carmen bedevil the soldier before he can find coquetry in her glance; he would not have a smile for Falstaff, nor a sigh for Coupeau, nor a tear for Valjean if he met them in the town. Life is not vivid to him; the stage is never trite. He cannot see the forest for the trees.

Men are not all born nor trained observers. There is drama in any street or house; but it is not there for all the world and his wife to see. The average British citizen is not reflective, and has no effective love or understanding of art.

The study of life is too onerous for the man in the street. It is, and must be, caviare to the general now, as in Israel and in Athens. Let us leave the average Briton to his literary gin-and-water, his journalistic spoon-meat, his dramatic cow-heel and onions. He does not care for brown bread-and-butter, olives, or French coffee, and prefers a Whitechapel "threepenny" to the finest of mild Havannahs. He works hard, and would fain be amused; and he has a Briton's right to be amused in his own way.

But, given an eye and a mind for the gentle art, there is no finer sport than that of watching life. And Mr. Pope is justified of man. What strange humours, what delightful contradictions, what dramatic contrasts are here for the patient student! No need to go far afield. Nothing to pay. The curtain is always up, the show is open day and night.

As Byron said—

There are things whose strong reality
Outshines our fairyland ; in shape and hues
More beautiful than our fantastic sky,
And the strange constellations which the
 Muse
O'er her wild universe is skilful to diffuse.

The longer I live, and the more complex, wonderful, awful does human nature become to me; and the more fascinating its study. Hence, despite my love of wood and sea and green plain and brimming river, I find myself drawn to the big towns. In a quiet rural home, let the flowers be never so bright, the air never so sweet, the birds never so full of song, I feel as if I had been taken out to some beautiful desolate island and marooned there.

So it is a real pleasure to me to get back into the Strand. A wonderful place, the Strand. Full of human folly, genius, baseness, heroism, beauty, and ruin. Who could say it—who can think

it, feel it, see it? What volumes are written on the faces and forms of the men and women you meet there in a half-hour's stroll!

The threadbare, shabby - genteel clothes, the squalid rags, the dainty silks and furs, the shameless and awful rouge and powder; the swagger, the mince, the slouch; the bowed shoulders, the hanging lip, the liquor-tainted cheek, the thoughtful brow, the bright and roving eye.

Who could tell the story of the poor wrecks who stand by the kerb selling matches, papers, toys? Who could guess the quenched hopes, the frustrated ambitions, the perished loves, and spoiled romances of these? Yonder old woman with the tray of studs and pins, of what is she dreaming? For she *does* dream; and so do the poorest and the oldest at their most desperate pass—or else God help them.

How London grows upon one! At first

the endless whirl, the cruel rush and greedy hurry of it, with all the misery, vulgarity, snobbery, and vanity of the crowd, the tragedies of its dismal streets, the poverty and ignorance of the workers, and the monotonous ugliness of their surroundings, sicken and dismay you. The pain and the shame of it are more than you can bear. You want to get away—away to the cool beaches and unsullied seas, or to the clean and quiet streets and the clean and quiet life of some sleepy old market town.

But, imperceptibly, London tightens its grip upon you. The mysterious and awful magnetism of the crowd hold you. You mix with the unnumbered, nameless millions until the swirling tides and feverish currents of the great human sea seem to carry you away.

The Strand is the most interesting street in England, perhaps in the world. Here you meet such bewildering variety of types. Dick Swiveller, Jane Eyre,

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Glory Quayle, Rawdon Crawley, Rebecca Sharp, Charles O'Malley, Adam Bede, Mr. Jaggers, Mr. Shandy, Parson Adams, Harry Foker, Pendennis, Borkman and Foldal, Vincent Crummles, Mr. Folair, Samson Brass, Richard Feverel, Midshipman Easy, Amelia Sedley, Dora Spenlow, Manon Lescaut, Ortheris and Learoyd, Honeyman, Stiggins, Costigan, Sairey Gamp, Allan Quatermain, Dicky Perrott, Sam Weller, Pennyloaf Candy, Nym and Bardolph, Bill Sikes, Colonel Newcome, Podsnap, Gradgrind, Bounderby, Wrayburn, Bunthorne, Cuckoo Bright, and the Beautiful Bountiful Bertie!

Nowhere is there such a crowd. You have painters, poets, novelists, pressmen, parsons, stockbrokers, mashers, millionaires, courtesans, lawyers, thieves, beggars, drunkards, betting men, pugilists, actresses, music-hall artistes, mechanics, shopgirls; all sorts and conditions of women and men: some climbing up the social ladder, some slipping down—some

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swaggering at the top, some grovelling at the bottom.

Yonder stands an old woman who has sold fruit or flowers in the Strand for forty years; yonder a jolly commissionaire, with a hook in place of the left hand he lost while bringing the guns away from Maiwand; yonder is a brilliant novelist in a bad hat; and yonder a well-born blackmailer in faultless Bond Street costume.

And at night, under the electric light, you shall see the broken vagrant skulking, and the painted faces of our sisters flitting—pitiful and ghastly.

One dare not tell the truth about the Strand. The truth is unutterable. On any night, at any hour, one could pick up a score—or a hundred—of fellow-creatures whose common round of life is one of hopeless tragedy.

Think of the millions in London. Think of the sum of life there—the tears and laughter, the poetry and meanness,

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the effort and futility, the beauty and ashes—in those miles of mean streets! Here “Evil says to Good, ‘My brother, my brother, I am one with thee.’”

Think how keenly you have felt, how eagerly you have lived, how blindly you have hoped; remember with what pain you winced under Fate’s knife or lash; with what zest you sucked the goblin fruits of pleasure—and then look at the drifting swarms of the Strand, and reflect how each of these has loved and suffered, hoped and despaired, cursed and given thanks, “even as you and I,” and now moves, with stolid front giving no sign; but with *our* dreams under the respectable hat or tawdry bonnet, and *our* passions and memories hugged to anxious hearts behind the prosaic garments of plain English citizens.

II

One of the most cheerful sights I have seen in London was an ancient

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Chinaman in an Italian restaurant. It was one day in winter. A black fog had settled down on London, and, as I always feel depressed by fog, I had gone into the brightly-lighted place and ordered a *fiasco* of Chianti—which is a cheering Tuscan wine.

The company was of the usual mixed kind—a church curate, fenced in by a daily paper and a clerical chill reserve; a brace of cocksure journalists discussing the affairs of Europe; several City men, with red gills, wide girths, stand-up collars, and tall hats; and in the far corner a young couple—he cold, correct, and self-satisfied, devoting his whole attention to a steak and chips; she pale, sad, and dreamy, trifling with her dinner, and looking wistfully out at the fog and its shadowy traffic as though she expected to find there Love or the ghost of Love.

Behind the counter was a languid Venetian girl, white and anæmic from

long hours and close confinement, but beautiful still. She was gazing down the room, seeing nothing.

Opposite to me, with a whole quarter of the room to himself, sat an old-faced Celestial, dressed in the costume of his country, and staring at nothing with a bland, expressionless, stolid Mongolian stare.

As for me, I sipped my Chianti and smoked my cigarette through my nose. I was enjoying myself.

Then the waiter brought to the Chinaman's table a bottle of champagne. I watched the Celestial. He filled his glass slowly, emptied it deliberately, refilled it, smacked his lips, and sat still. And then by slow degrees, beginning with a tiny beam in the almond eyes, followed by a flickering dimple at the corner of the thin mouth, there spread over his yellow face a happy, happy smile. Oh, what a smile it was, and how it widened and deepened and grew

mellower and softer as the liquid sunshine from the gold-capped bottle was diffused through his veins, bringing colour to his sallow cheek and sparkles to his sleepy eyes! A sublime smile—not an artful, not a perky, not a saucy smile; but a smile like that which transfigures the face of an amiable, well-washed baby when you tickle his fat neck with one finger.

And of course our Chinaman could not keep such a smile as that to himself. It was too broad, too benevolent a smile to be fenced in with a cold wall of polite reserve. It was a smile that insisted upon sharing itself out, shining, like the blessed sunlight, with equal radiance, warmth, and loving-kindness, upon good and bad alike.

So our Chinaman beamed upon the company at large. The sad girl in the corner did not see it—she continued to look out into the black fog; and she sighed. The greedy youth with her

had eyes only for his dinner. The curate coughed. The Venetian waitress turned her dark eyes slowly upon the Celestial and smiled beautifully, showing her small white teeth and dimpling her pale cheeks. The journalists looked across and sniggered. The City men glowered over their collars and seemed pained, and I, for a marvel, lifted up my glass and pledged the benevolent heathen across the room.

It was great business. The Celestial bowed very low to me, drank to me, and went on smiling. And, outside, the traffic boomed and splashed in the mud of Fleet Street, and the black fog pressed down like a palpable burden upon the hearts of men.

Four of us were dreamers there: the Celestial, the pale girl, the Venetian girl, and I. Of what were *they* dreaming, those two wistful women? And why did the mandarin smile (I hope he was a mandarin), and what did he

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think of the London fog, and what shadow-play of past romance or prospective ambition was passing before the eyes of his soul, while the greedy youth was munching his dinner and the City magnates were discussing shares?

From far lands, by strange ways, had we three drifted to that London restaurant to share the bounty of that smile. I am in debt to that Chinaman. He did me good.

One fair spring morning, when the drab streets were illuminated with glowing masses of daffodils, and one caught whiffs of sweetness from violets and hyacinths, I was wandering broodily along Ludgate Circus, with Browning's lines running through my mind like a tune—

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And the stalls in our streets looked rare
With bulrush and water-cresses ;

when my eye rested on the phrenologist's window, in which hung three grim

sallow skulls. Yes. Three human skulls. The first was labelled "A Successful Head"; the second, "An Unsuccessful Head"; the third, "A Criminal Type." I stopped to study them. They were all brown, battered, and jawless. They stared blankly out of their bony orbits at the King Lud, and seemed to take no interest in anything. It must be many years since their owners, at the behest of the grisly constable, had "passed away."

"A Successful Head"! The irony of it! Here was a head so successful as to succeed in successfully finding its way into a Cockney shop window. Nay, it had even succeeded in getting a hole bored through the top of its skull to hang it up by. A pretty success, indeed.

Whose head was it? How came it here, and whence? Was it a "fatal accident," a "found drowned," a work-house infirmary "case"; or what?

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When its lost jaw was bearded, when its staring orbits held liquid eyes, and its vanished tongue wagged bravely, did the brain under that stringhole, in wildest dream or most morbid fancy ever conceive the possibility of this its successful public appearance? Was it a poet, a painter, a philanthropist? Who loved it, who scorned it, who kissed it where the teeth are grinning, who boxed it on the ear? Did it wear a tall silk hat, a spotless collar? Did it love Beethoven and Herrick? Did it smoke a meerschaum or a briar? Did it drink Chianti, or prefer coffee? Did it ever toss on its pillow sleeplessly because some poor female ghost looked kindlier upon another skull? Nay, its rival may have been that "Criminal Type" or that "Unsuccessful Head."

The poor old "Unsuccessful Head"! Perchance it belonged of yore to some Jay Gould of the period, or was it carried upon the shoulders of a Lord Mayor or

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an erotic poet? Who knows? But yet we see it here cheek by jowl with the "Successful Head" and the "Criminal Type"—the latter, it may be, once used by a Cabinet Minister or able Editor: the criminal type, the successful and the unsuccessful skulls, are here on a level in the same dusty window, blindly staring at the same old human strife and folly; the same old speedless haste and aimless hurry, and bootless care of the crowded London street—

Outside of all the worlds and ages,
There where the fool is as the sage is,
There where the slayer is clean of blood,
No end, no passage, no beginning,
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,
There where the good man is not good.

To this complexion must we come at last! We are like leaves before the winds of Fate. Who knows what thing the sarcastic gods have in store for us by way of reward for all our vain-glorious mouthings; our aspirations

after higher things ! Perchance, Horatio, yonder constable, when he shall have laid by the insolence of office and the truncheon of force, shall "pass away" and lay his skull and his greatness here ! There is a stern justice in life—sometimes : who knows ?

And later on the same day, in a surgical shop in High Holborn, I saw the white bones of a woman's arm. The arm was extended, the hand stretched out prone—as though to pat the curly head of a much-loved child. I stopped to look at it, with a strange sensation in my throat, as of a hay-seed that was hard to swallow. The skeleton hand, to use an expressive Yankeeism, "hit me where I lived."

A woman's arm !

Nearly all God's creatures love excitement and adventure. The British boy has in him a strong strain of Tartarin de Tarascon. He revels in imaginary

travels, combats, and deeds of derring-do. He dreams of cavalry charges, Polar expeditions, lion hunts, desert islands, Red Indian raids, naval battles, coral reefs, primeval forests, and pirates on the Spanish Main. He longs to emulate Sir Walter Raleigh, Dr. Livingstone, Admiral Drake, Leatherstocking, Robinson Crusoe, Charles O'Malley, Sherlock Holmes, D'Artagnan, and Midshipman Easy. What the girls dream about I cannot guess. But they dream.

Do we lose this zest for adventure and thirst for excitement as we grow up? To some extent; but not wholly. Else why are we so fond of novels and plays? These things are not *real* romance, not *real* adventure, and only help us to revel in exploits that are vicarious. Like the orange wine of the Marchioness, their intoxication depends greatly upon our own capacity to "pretend" enough. Therefore we pretend. We may never ride at the guns of Balaclava, we may

never "shoot stripes in the jungle," nor sail the Spanish Main. But we can pretend. We have known what it was "to sigh for whirlwinds," and now we have "to do the best we can with the bellows."

Some there are, however, who will not content themselves with pretending. For them a novel is but a provocation, a stage play, not bread but a stone. They will go forth into the realities of things, and make little comedies, stories, and dramas of their own—a most perilous, and a by no means healthy, enterprise: a form of mental dissipation calculated to make the judicious grieve: a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance. It is better to pretend; it is safer to pretend; in the end, it is pleasanter to pretend.

A while ago I read in a daily paper the protest of some rash young person who had grown weary of drinking nothing out of gilt property goblets,

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and, like Omar's nightingale, demanded "wine, wine, wine." "If," said this daring aspirant for dangerous elixirs, "if we will only bring to our own lives—ordered with a careful unscrupulousness—delivered from the burden of a 'sickly conscience'—the æsthetic appreciation which we bring to plays, we shall learn to turn them into plays which will simply 'knock' the plays of the mimic world 'endways.'"

I hope not. That way trouble lies: self-consciousness, self-introspection, and the perils of playing with fire and sharp edges. I have seen this game played; and I know. I have seen those lives ordered with a careful unscrupulousness, and what came of them. I am in case to make oath and declare that it would have been better for some of the neurotic artists in life who brought their æsthetic appreciation to bear upon unripe forbidden fruits had they gone in for a stern course of Bach's fugues, Plato's

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dialogues, and Adam Smith, with a man's share of log-chopping and potato-hoeing by way of recreation.

Again I say, No, these are not wholesome sports for Bobus of Houndsditch and Toots of Brixton Hill. Let these now harmless persons stick to their cricket reports, their *Sorrows of Satan*, their *Florodora*, and commit no violence upon their "sickly consciences," nor imperil the peace of the king's lieges by trying with their weak arms and clumsy fingers to shoot in Robin Hood's bow.

No playing at life an' you love us. No morbid self-worship, but, for those who may, a pleasant and quiet study of the wonderful books in the great human library.

For there is a middle course, which "cheers but not inebriates."

To step boldly upon the stage of life, and insist upon taking a part in some actual drama, is dangerous, and rather

morbid. To pretend must, to some palates, prove insipid. A safe and agreeable compromise may be effected by taking a place in the pit or the stalls of the theatre of real life, and watching the tragedies and comedies there enacted by our fellow-creatures.

Here you may study character, here you may study life, here you may listen to true stories, and enjoy real drama. After which the novel and the theatre will seem tame and dim. And, by virtue of which, the desire to play a small part yourself in *one* performance shall give place to the interest and amusement of looking on, at ease, and in safety, at many.

The drama of real life does not depend for its interest and charm upon costume, scenery, or properties. It becomes, to the initiated, as thrilling, as picturesque, as dramatic, in Fleet Street, or Brixton, or Piccadilly, as in San Francisco, Capetown, Bombay, or the

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Quartier Latin. But it is an acquired enjoyment, and perhaps demands peculiar taste or gifts.

Or is it only interest and sympathy that are needed? Or do we reject the human document because its virility and complexity jar upon our sentimentalities or rattle the crazy windows of our enfeebled literary conventions?

There is the lady next door. She is, I am convinced, a good wife, and devoted to her husband. But the novelist would not make a romance of her, suffer or brave what she might for love's sake. He dare not give her a leading rôle in his mawkish play; her humour would kill his sentiment. For she has humour. She is a sharp-featured, lynx-eyed woman, with an abundance of golden hair, streaked a little at the sides with silver. She is plump, erect, agile, voluble, and discourses to my own wife across the garden hedge, to my great but secret joy.

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Her piercing treble comes up here like bells. I cannot distinguish my wife's words. "Oh! so you *have*. Split it right across the toe. And such a pretty shoe. And, oh, what doll's feet! My dear, look at mine. Though you needn't look. I know you must be conscious of them. They *do* obtrude themselves on the public notice, don't they? And then, what boots! great clump soles, the terror of all creeping things. When I walk, one would suppose from the sound that I had a pair of wooden legs. Instead of which, my dear—but it's not for me to speak, is it? Tire me? Well, they are a weight; but they're not my regular walking boots. Oh no! not my best, you know. I have left my best at home. Oh, my dear, you never did. What I suffered with those boots! Hurt me? I should think so; hurt my feelings. I have their footprints on my heart, I am sure. And my husband did nothing but laugh.

Oh, my dear, they are beasts, those men. I don't know why we marry them. Must be because there's no choice. However, my man was brutal about those boots. My dear, they looked all right. It was the row they made. Squeaked? Bless you, that's no name for it. They squealed, my dear; they chirped and whistled. As I told the man at the boot-shop, the cricket on the hearth was a fool to them. Say? the idiot! He said most new boots did creak. 'Well,' I said, 'I've heard boots creak, but these play tunes. I want a pair of boots, my man, not a pair of musical boxes. I might as well go into church behind a fife-and-drum band!' So, of course, he rubbed his ridiculous hands, and bowed, and put his absurd head on one side, and said he would make the boots all right. So I left them. I said, 'You make them dry up, will you? Put them to sleep, tell them to lie down. I don't

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want people to think I've got a brood of young chickens under my skirts.' And I left them. Eh? Oh yes. He made them dumb. And my husband and I went for a lovely long walk, and the boots never played a note. And we got home late and went to bed; and when I took my stockings off, my dear, I had feet like a Pondo chief—as black as a pitch-pot, and as greasy as the axle of a cart. The silly ass of a bootman had taken out the insole and packed it with a layer of black grease. Dubbing he called it. Dubbing, my dear. And all the servants in bed, and nothing but cold water in the bath. Did ever you hear of such a thing? But it's so like a British workman. As I told the man, I said, 'If you had a brick wall round you and a clock in your hat, you'd be a perfect idiot asylum.' Yes. But, my dear, I had to sleep with my feet wrapped up in my flannel—"

At this point I discreetly withdraw.

Of course, to the unimaginative man there could be no romance in the life of such a chatty comic woman as the lady next door. To the imaginative man there might be much. But only a genius could read it ; and he must spell it out slowly, and leave much unread. Our insight is but shallow, our eyes are dim, our human limitations are straight and strict.

We cannot see the stars when the sun shines. I sometimes think our earthly wisdom—our human knowledge—is like the cloak of light that hangs around us by day, helping us to see our way about our business, but blinding us to the worlds above ; and I sometimes think that not until the night comes, and the terrestrial light is quenched, shall we see the starry galaxies that shine beyond our present ken.

Meanwhile, if we take off our blinkers and use our eyes, we can find better plays outside the theatre than in, and

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better novels in the trains and restaurants than any in Mudie's library. For fiction and the drama are, or should be, pictures of human life, and the streets of the world are full of men and women.

OF TOMMY ATKINS

THE charge brought against the military novelists by civilian admirers of Mr. Atkins is, in effect, a charge of exaggeration. Tommy, we are told, is more sober, more moral, and less illiterate than he is painted.

I have cogitated this matter with great cogibundity over several pipes, and I have arrived at the conclusion that, as there is something to be said on both sides, I may as well clear the air and turn an honest penny by trying to say it.

The three best known figures in English military fiction are Kipling's Musketeers. There are Mulvaney, an Irish scapegrace, fond of drink, women,

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fighting, and general wickedness; Ortheris, a Cockney corner-boy, of similar tastes; and Learoyd, a Yorkshire tyke, whose most distinctly marked characteristic is his native love for dogs. These men are all presented as bad characters and good soldiers. Their morals are about on a level with the morals of the average soldier as I knew him, and their respect for "the widder" does not extend itself to the widder's English.

Now, no writer of soldier tales will pretend that all soldiers are as ill-equipped with sobriety, chastity, and syntax as our *Soldiers Three*, and no soldier will pretend that all the men in the ranks are as witty, as eloquent, or as amusing as Mr. Kipling's heroes. And it is just here that we find the crux of the question.

The military novelist has to approach his subject with the selective eye of an artist. There are in all regiments many

sober, well-conducted, well-spoken soldiers; but these men, although often the best of fighting material, are not as writing material of much account. Mulvaney, though by no means respectable, is certainly picturesque; Ortheris is illiterate, but he is amusing. Tales about teetotal Tommies, who spend their evenings in the reading-room, and never do anything wicked or wild or funny, might be flattering to the army, but they would be intolerably dull. The white hen who never lays away is an admirable fowl, but does not appeal to the writer of humorous sketches or tales of adventure. The artist instinctively selects the black and draggled bird of predatory and combative habits, whose escapades and follies are rich in "copy." Messrs. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis are not by any means proper persons, but they are very precious to us all. Dogberry was not lucid, nor Falstaff moral; Nym, Bardolph, and

Pistol were spongy knaves and swaggerers ; Sancho Panza was an ignorant clown, and Panurge a bad lot ; but we laugh at these naughty varlets, we laugh with them, we love them all.

Had Kipling presented Mulvaney as a portrait of the average soldier of to-day, there would be cause for some demur. But he nowhere makes any such claim for Terence. Indeed, if I remember rightly, he expressly introduces his three pets as the greatest scapegraces in 'the corps.

The question to be asked, therefore, is not whether all soldiers are like these, but whether any soldiers are like these. If there be any, or many, men in the ranks of the Ortheris and the Mulvaney types, then Mr. Kipling is justified in the sight of men, for it is his inalienable right as an artist to select any types he may consider best suited to his purpose.

In the matter of the Queen's English,

Mr. Kipling is, I think, less defensible; and this because, amongst all the Kipling soldiers I can remember, there is not one whose speech is not illiterate. Take the *Barrack-Room Ballads* as an example. In these the Tommies speak a dialect composed of barrack slang and costermonger's English. Barrack slang is used in the ranks, and many soldiers are drawn from the illiterate classes of London; but I think that, as a rule, soldiers speak more correctly than civilians of their own rank in life, the tendency of army life being to assimilate all dialects into one, and to slightly amend the level of merit in grammar and pronunciation — the amendment being due partly to travel and experience, and partly to the example of educated officers. So that, when Kipling makes nearly all his soldiers speak in this patois—

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't
no blackguards too,

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I think he is fairly open to the charge of offering comic caricature as humorous portrait-painting.

Mr. Kipling evidently loves Tommy Atkins, as I do, and has evidently painted him with a loving brush and a glowing palette. Moreover, Tommy owes a debt of gratitude to this brilliant artist for the change his work has wrought in the public estimate of Tommy ; and our soldiers may, I think, pardon a few small blemishes, and bear in mind the fact that a writer of songs and stories has not only to do justice to his subject, but must also interest and amuse his readers.

Until quite recently the soldier of fiction was a good deal of a fancy sketch, for we cannot admit the men of Lever and John Strange Winter as truthful or detailed drawings.

But we must not suppose, therefore, that no real or masterly pictures of soldiers and soldiery had appeared prior

to the advent of the splendidly wrought cameos of Jakin and Lew in *The Drums of the Fore and Aft*.

Kipling's men are powerfully and smartly done, yet I must claim that none of Kipling's Tommies is as humorous or as faithful a type of the genuine British infantry soldier as the immortal Corporal Trim. By the way, Trim's name was certainly not Joseph.

Denis, in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, is a good soldier type and a noble piece of humorous human portraiture, but Denis is rather old-fashioned, and is not English.

Fielding, in *Tom Jones*, gives us a few graphic lightning sketches of rude soldiery and lewd officers on the march, and in *Barry Lyndon* Thackeray paints a luridly terrible and manifestly realistic picture of the horrors and debaucheries of life in the Prussian service of the period.

Then we have Erckmann and Cha-

trian, the finest battle-painters in modern literature, with some truthful and artistic sketches of sergeants and privates, veterans and conscripts, which are excellent, but French; and I regard the Major and Peggy O'Dowd of *Vanity Fair* as amongst the finest and faithfulest figures of barrack society ever given to us.

I have known the counterpart of many of these masterpieces, and have soldiered with them. Corporal Trim is an old friend of mine. I could find him in any line regiment in the British army to-day. And I knew and loved Mistress Peggy O'Dowd, and was nursed by her in South Wales; and for Denis, and Rawdon Crawley, and Corporal Brock, and Dickens' Doctor Slammer, they are still extant, I'll warrant you. Ortheris I have met also, and Learoyd was in my company in the Ramchunders; but for Private Mulvaney, look you, I hold him too overdrawn and impossible.

Mr. Kipling's knowledge of the soldier

was not gained from life in barracks, and is therefore sometimes at fault. His scheme of barrack life appears to exclude the non-commissioned officer. In no regiment would the sergeants and corporals have allowed such an excess of latitude as that enjoyed by the *Soldiers Three*. Neither in my experience were soldiers jingoes or braggarts, nor did they revel in bloodshed. Frankly, and despite my admiration for Mr. Kipling's literary genius, I cannot help feeling that there is a good deal of the music-hall artist about Ortheris and Mulvaney.

But the South African war has removed this question of the verity of the literary soldier from the field of conjecture, by providing us with abundance of direct evidence. In the numerous books on the war, and, more especially, in the letters sent home by our soldiers at the front, the actual Tommy Atkins stands revealed.

He stands before us a very human and

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a very British soldier : brave, humorous, patient, chivalrous, and invincibly cheerful. He is there to see, and to hear, and to feel—the real Tommy Atkins, not the swaggering blackguard of the more lurid literature: the first-class fighting-man, who does not funk, who does not brag, who does not hate, who does not know when he is beaten.

Here is the testimony of Captain L. March Phillips, quoted from his excellent book, *With Rimington*—

What I think about our soldiers' courage is, that it is of such a sort that it takes very little out of them. One of the foreign officers on Lord Roberts' staff has written that the English infantry, more than any he knows, has the knack of fighting and marching and keeping on at it, day after day, without getting stale or suffering any reaction. The fact is, our Tommies go into a fight with much the same indifferent good-humour that they do everything else with. Towards the end of each day's march the soldiers all begin to look out for firewood, and if at that time you knock up

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against the enemy you may see our infantry advancing to the attack with big logs tied to their backs and sticking up over their heads. Though it encumbers and bothers them, and makes them much more conspicuous, not a Tommy will abandon his wood. Supper is a reality. The thought of being shot does not bother him. Men who fight like this can fight every day.

A still more useful book for our purpose is *The Epistles of Atkins*. In this book Mr. James Milne has collected a number of illustrative passages from letters sent home by soldiers and reproduced in the press. Here we have examples of Tommy Atkins in many moods, and here we may obtain some measure of his humour, his sentiment, and his syntax.

I will pick out a few samples of Tommy's wit, strength, and imagination. One of the Black Watch, describing Magersfontein, says, "Hell opened upon us." Another soldier, speaking of the attempt to recapture the guns at

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Colenso, says, "You might as well have tried to take a gentleman's honour from him." Another, looking at himself in the lid of his mess-tin, says, "I tell you, I do look a fair stage villain." Another says, "We are like mountain brigands, or rather like a regiment of Rip Van Winkles." A man hit in the knee says, "It knocked me for six." Two brothers are seeking each other after a battle. The elder relates, "At last I saw the young devil, as whole as I was, but white as the dawn, and didn't we shake hands!"

As for Tommy's wit and humour, they are perennial and unquenchable. One man from Ladysmith says, "We ate three regiments of cavalry." Another man, being asked, during the siege, if he can take part in a concert, says, "No. I can play the bones; but I've ate 'em." Having gobbled up his "emergency ration," poor Tommy alludes to it as "his imaginary ration." An artillery-

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man, shot through the helmet, says it is "an outer to the Boers." A man under fire rushes forward from one cover to another, and remarks to a comrade, "I was thinking of that song, 'I'm expecting it every minute.'" A poor fellow is hit three times in quick succession. A friend observes that "the Boers must have taken him for the running man." A mounted man writes about his horse on the way to Spion Kop: "We were talking about the different funds for widows and orphans, and somebody behind asked which was the best. My chum called out 'Mansion House,' whereupon my horse stopped dead, and would not move until there arose the cry, 'Higher up, please.' Then he went on slowly ; all of which showed us that he was one of the old London 'bussers.'" A Boer throws down his Mauser and calls out, "Don't shoot me ; I'm a field-cornet." "I don't care," replies Tommy, "if you're a brass band. Hands up !"

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To conclude, here is a curious experience of my own, with the real Tommy Atkins as he lives.

Some of us one night picked up a little wounded Lancashire soldier, penniless and houseless, in London, and set him on his way to camp again. I asked him how he felt when he first went under fire. He answered simply, "Well; I was feared."

Yet this same man who was "feared" was afterwards shot through the shoulder through exposing himself to save a friend. And when I said, "That was hard lines for you," the splendid little man replied, "No; he would 'a been killed. Besides, he'd five kids, and I've nobbut two. So it's as well as it is."

In a letter to one of the London dailies a lady recently declared that Hooliganism is the direct result of the war spirit. But the war spirit does not seem to have made a Hooligan of that rough little hero from sorry Salford.

He has been through the blood, the violence, and the shame, and has come back modest, gentle, humane, and chivalrously unselfish. Hooligans! Sir Philip Sidney was not a finer gentleman than the little Lancashire private. "I'm spoiled for work," the little hero told me; "th' bullet touched me lung, an' me right arm's paralysed." But yet he made no complaint. He had only two children, and his chum had five. And it was as well as it was.

So, "Here's *to* you, Tommy Atkins; you're a first-class fighting-man."

OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE

Beside the old hall-fire, upon my nurse's
knee,
Of happy fairy days what tales were told
to me.
I thought the world was once all peopled
with princesses,
And my heart would beat to hear their
loves and their distresses ;
And many a quiet night, in slumber sweet
and deep,
The pretty fairy people would visit me in
sleep.

THACKERAY.

OUGHT "Fifty Not Out" to write about
fairies? Perhaps not. Perhaps my
hand is too heavy, my bent too realistic,
for such ethereal dainties.

The fact is, I prefer Henry James to

the Brothers Grimm, and am more at home in the Strand or the Mile End Road than in Sinbad's Valley. Even as a child my stay in Fairyland was brief; and after I had fared with Christian through the little wicket, and had been wrecked on Crusoe's Island, the romance of reality began to weave its spells about me, and the lights of London lured me from the shadowy spires of Camelot.

I could tell of weird magicians who conjured palaces and broad acres out of stocks and shares; I could tell of knights-errant who rescued sweet ladies from wicked ogres, and beat them when they had become their wives; and how the gentle maid, whose lips dropped jewels, found sadly, in a hungry time, that porkers have no love for pearls. But these would be no fairy fancies—only common facts. Bah! the bald pedestrian fact—the brown bread-and-butter and water-cress and tea of life, these are for

tame maturity. All children, young or old, instinctively prefer the higher truth—the truth as it should be, perhaps *may* be: who knows?

Many folks, and amongst them some who should know better, seem to imagine that Shakespeare invented Fairyland as Dickens is said to have invented Christmas. Shakespeare's genius was a kind of sunshine, gilding all it touched. He idealised the fairies as he idealised Rome and Arden and the tragedy of Hamlet. But he did not invent the fairies. Indeed he did no more for them than he did for the English sovereigns, whose coarse mouths he dignified with purple eloquence, transfiguring each poor bramble or cabbage of a king into a conventional rose of chivalry.

No; the fairies are much older than Shakespeare—older than the Aryan and the cave man. But of their ancientry and their origin you may read, if you

please, in Max Müller and Keighley, in Nutt and Clodd, and Ossian and Lönnrot; it is impossible to touch them even in outline here. Certainly there were fairies in the early Stone Age, for men had imagination then, as the scratched slate testifies; and the study of those early dreams, were one but in the mood, might prove engrossing.

But to-day, and for me, the antiquity of my own childhood seems a sufficiently remote and dim distance. *My* fairy lore began in the 'fifties. It began also—as it does for most of us—with the home firelight and the tones of my mother's voice. I can well remember now (which of us cannot?) my mother's manner of telling stories: the play of expression in her face, the modulation of her voice, the soul-shaking "glare withal" of her eyes (my mother was an actress) in the dramatic situations. I am not the only man, by some millions, who has listened with the fascination of

delightful terror to the grim answers which the wolf gave to Red Riding Hood's timid askings. But it seems to me that my mother—perhaps because of her theatrical training—had a more than usually portentous and awful way with her, and my spinal column, in spite of Darwin's iconoclastic triumphs and the stiffening of years and the lumbago, is still conscious of the chill induced by some of those family recitals, when the "charred ash dropped out of the dropping fire," and the fluctuating light made the shadows waver and beckon on the ceiling, or start out in sudden masses from behind the furniture, like nebulous and uncouth "goblins of the pit."

There was, in particular, one awful tragedy, in verse, which never failed to convert me into a miniature Bob Acres. This was known as "Mrs. Mace," and, delivered in the Ercles vein, with a tragic sternness that spared the quiver-

ing and susceptible audience no pang,
ran as follows—

Mrs. Mace and Mrs. Mouse lived together
in a house.

Mrs. Mace went out one day, and left Mrs.
Mouse at home to skim the pot—*and*
she fell in.

The doors rattled, and the windows creaked,
And the chairs and stools jumped about like
mad!

To think that Mrs. Mace went out one day,
And left Mrs. Mouse at home to skim the
pot—*and she fell in.*

Br-r-r! I never see the appalling sleep-
walking scene in *Macbeth* without think-
ing of Mrs. Mouse.

Mark Twain, in a paper of his, "How
to tell a Story," claims that Americans
are unequalled in the art of verbal
recital. He gives also, as an old negro
story which he used to tell on the plat-
form, one of the stories which my
mother used to tell to me. It is called
"The Golden Arm," and describes how

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a woman broke her arm, and had to have "a beautiful golden arm"; and how she died, and her husband went to her grave and stole the golden arm; and how the ghost came to fetch it back again.

I have read Mark Twain's version of that story, and his instructions for telling it, and I can assure him that my mother's version was more creepy, and that her telling of it used to freeze my young blood. She got the "pause" all right, Mr. Clemens, *and* the "snap"; and as for the "jumping," *I* did that. I did it every time, and I used to dread the thought of that story, and yet could no more resist the desire to hear it than Eugene Aram could resist the impulse to go back and exhume the "demd, damp, unwholesome body" of his murdered victim.

But we did not always sup full of horrors. Sometimes we climbed eagerly up the beanstalk after Jack the Giant

Killer ; sometimes we chuckled over the confidence tricks which the little piggie put upon the fierce but over-credulous wolf ; sometimes we summoned that universal benefactor of youth, the Geni of the Lamp ; and once—once we went to a pantomime.

Ah ! that *was* a pantomime. It was the first I saw, and the very best. I have been to several pantomimes of late years ; but I never see such scenery, such dresses, such lovely fairies, such a fearsome wolf, such a comic countryman, so sweet a Red Riding Hood. And as for the prince, he (or rather she), dressed in silver armour, with a crown and plumes, was the most gallant, graceful, and handsome person these eyes have ever beheld. Heigho ! modern pantomimes may be very well—for these degenerate days ; but you cannot find a fairy prince like mine, and—would you believe me ? — I sometimes leave a theatre before the pantomime is over.

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Yes! I believe that princess was my first love, and I was true to her for quite a long while—indeed, until I was sent to Frampton's school to learn dancing, and met The Little Goldfinch, who was a professional fairy. Then I succumbed. But who can resist a fairy?

My fairy was a dark-eyed little minx, dressed in yellow satin, and was to become—and perhaps did become—a great dancer. I worshipped her in silence, and she laughed at me, for I was painfully shy, and suffered acutely during my public lessons. I was awkward too; and one day, when little Goldfinch, as the clever pupil, was told to “make” me dance the polka with her, I felt ready to faint, and made such a triumphant mess of the steps that Frampton intervened.

He was a terrible man, Frampton: tall, thin, and solemn, and dressed in close-fitting black. When angry with a pupil he would throw his fiddle-stick at

him, at the same time uttering an awful yell. When the Goldfinch drew away from me he threw the stick, and then came down the room on his toes, looking fierce and awful, and expecting me to fall upon my knees in terror. But I had a great sense of my own dignity—and, besides, there was a lady present; so that, instead of being abjectly afraid, I was furiously angry, and as the tall black figure charged upon me I stamped my feet with rage, uttered a howl which made the chandeliers ring, and then, in a voice that was “a windy shriek in all their ears,” I bade him, through my snapping teeth, “Go to Putney—on a *pig*!”

And the Goldfinch laughed, and all was over. And I left the school and my fairy, and could never be induced to dance a step again. But for this disaster I might have risen to be a stage manager.

After all, I was not as proud of know-

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ing a fairy as of knowing a real live clown. The fairy I could only gloat over in secret ; but the friendship of the clown was an open boast, and brought me many a sweet dish of envy in the society of less favoured boys.

I could hardly have reached my sixth year, when I began to tell fairy tales of my own manufacture. In Glasgow I made the acquaintance of a little girl named Harriet Chicken, whose father was a travelling showman. Harriet, who was some years my senior, was a born story-teller, and often have I formed one of her audience as she sat on a step a little higher up the flight than we, and repeated or invented tales of faërie for the joy and profit of the commonweal. And thus, I suppose, I got the idea of starting as a *raconteur* on my own account.

My chief auditor was my juvenile elder brother, and the theatre of my display was generally bed. Indeed we used in

the early mornings to hold beds of fiction as peculiar in their way as Mr. Shandy's beds of justice. For my stories were built on original lines. I say built advisedly, since I was constrained to *see* a story before I could tell it, and to that end used first to draw the whole romance in the air with my finger, then to eat the unsubstantial fabric of the vision by handfuls, and finally to *sing* it, most of my tales being epic in character and set to a kind of plain song or chant. Perhaps one of my ancestors was a wandering minstrel.

I can remember little of these stories now except their titles. "Jacky Morner and the Crab" was, I believe, by way of being a comic poem; then there was "The Peerless Beauty," an account of an unfortunate but fair damsel—borrowed doubtless from the melodramatic stage—who was left by father, mother, sister, and brother, to battle with a sea of troubles, and was finally rescued by

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her sweetheart, who alone proved true. In the plot of this story I think I perceive the genius of Harriet Chicken. There was, moreover, a Homeric recital in which two bodies of warriors called the "Scattered Army" and the "Mixed Army" performed valiantly upon each other's crests. I have forgotten the title of this heroic drama, but remember that so equal was my admiration for the puissance of the two armies that I never could make up my mind to give to either side a decisive victory—a weakness which drew from my brother much candid and unfavourable criticism.

Harriet was a story-teller of Oriental brilliance. She dealt in the magnificent and the sentimental, and possessed some gift for the weird, which at times of stress and trial—as when Madame Chicken's temper was east by north, with sudden squalls, or when sums had refused to add up, or when late arrival at the seat of learning had brought

upon Harriet the brand of cane—would sometimes sink into the morbid. Her style was trenchant and picturesque, and, like all the great masters, when she could not find a word to clothe her thought with grace and distinction, she made one. I fear I should come lamely off in any attempt to imitate or reconstruct one of her romances ; but perhaps the following short sketch of the King of Bowker's Yard may convey to the imaginative reader some suggestion of the Homeric feasts to which my early friend and leader, in the pleasant paths of fiction, was wont to treat the select circle of admirers, whose privilege it was to sit upon the lower steps of her throne. To "Dubbins Rex," at anyrate, I have given the large self-respect, the verbal daring, and some of the faculty for improvising costumes and properties upon an unequalled scale of magnificence, which belonged as of right to our Queen Harriet.

DUBBINS REX.

Dubbins was King of Bowker's Yard. All the other boys feared and envied Dubbins, all the girls admired Dubbins, and the word of Dubbins was law.

This was due to Dubbins's personality. Dubbins was a born leader. Dubbins believed in himself. Dubbins knew what was due to himself. Dubbins lived up to himself, and was ready, if needs might be, to die up to himself also.

Dubbins was boastful, but brave; tyrannical, but not mean; selfish, but not greedy; cunning, but not deceitful; and much too cocksure of his own superiority to be weakly jealous of the ability of others.

Besides, Dubbins was the oldest boy, the biggest boy, the strongest boy, and the naughtiest boy, in Bowker's Yard.

Therefore he was king of the yard, and none dare say him nay.

But never did the genius of Dubbins

shine with such lustre as when Dubbins unbent himself in a Homeric spirit of recital. Then, indeed, did Dubbins reign, and the hearts of his subjects melt with reverence—or envy.

It was our good fortune to assist—unseen—at one of these *séances* of Dubbins Rex.

It had been a close, hot day, and it was a hot and stuffy evening. The air of Bowker's Yard was thick and sickly, the odours of Bowker's Yard were "stronger, but no sweeter, than roses."

Dubbins sat upon the top step of the back entrance to the clogger's shop. His faithful people, a dozen children of both sexes and various ages, were grouped upon the steps below him.

Clara Binns demanded order. She said, "Billy Birtles, shut yer trap; Nancy, give up wigglin', Dubbins is a-going to tell us a story."

The crowd of courtiers settled down,

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after some "wiggings" and nudgings, into expectant and respectful silence.

Dubbins set his cap well back on his head, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, stretched out his legs, and said, with proud modesty, "Well, I don' care, but you kids better keep bloomin' quiet, 'cos this 'ere tale's a buster."

The courtiers held their breath. Emma Rutter did open her mouth, but the eye of Dubbins was upon her, and nothing came out of it.

Dubbins spoke again, with great solemnity: "This 'ere tale ain't a tale, 'cos it's Gord's truth; if it ain't, I'll be choused. See?"

The audience cried "Yes."

"Don't scutter," said Dubbins, coldly; "jes' nod yer pimples."

The court nodded their heads with feverish energy,

"Good," said Dubbins. "There were a prince."

Dubbins looked round sternly for signs of doubt.

"There were a prince," he resumed, "an' this 'ere prince 'ad a father 'an a mother. An' they lived in a pallis; an' round this pallis there were a garding, an' round this garding there were a wall, an' round this wall there were a river, an' this 'ere river were a mile wide an' a mile deep, an' that full o' kippers, an' haddicks, an' crabs, an' shrimps, as you could easy ha' scooped 'em out with a shovel. See?"

The court nodded.

"They lived in style in the pallis," said Dubbins; "they 'ad meat fur every meal, patent leather boots, rings on all their fingers, tall toppers, an' velvet coats with dimond buttons on 'em as big as glass alleys."

Dubbins coughed, and crossed his legs. Sophy Smith said, "Oo." Dubbins looked her down.

"They never drink'd nothin' but cham-

pagne wine," said Dubbins, "an' they washed theirselves in milk, an' used ginger pop to clean the steps with. See?"

The court nodded.

"Well, things went on swimmin'," continued Dubbins, "until one fine day the king says to the queen, says he, 'Look 'ere, ole gel,' 'e says, 'chouse me,' 'e says, 'if it ain't time as our kid went to school.'

"'Right yer are,' says the queen; 'but none o' these bloomin' coves in our schools don't know nothin', and I votes fur sendin' 'im orf to the rial collidge of Marmalado, where they'll put 'im through up to the nines, an' no schrimshankin' about it,' she says.

"So they packed the prince's carpit bag, an' sit 'im up on a white ellerfunt, with a flunkey on a camil, an' a bobby on a horse, an' a buttons on a pony, an' a bootblack on a moke, an' orph they went with a rattle fur furrin parts."

At this point Henrietta Sharples, carried away by the eloquence of the recital, uttered an enthusiastic ejaculation of "Good old Dubbins," and called down upon herself an angry "Stow it" from Clara Binns, and a dignified but gentle "No chinwag, *please*," from Dubbins Rex himself. Henrietta hung her head, and the story was resumed.

"The name o' this 'ere prince was Bill, same as mine, an' 'e were nine year old, same as me, but 'e weren't as big as me, not by a chunk, 'e weren't, an' 'e 'ad long 'air, like a gel; but fur all that 'e were a fine feller, an' could lick any boy in 'is street, *easy*."

"So they rode on faster and farther, till they comed to a forest, an' stopped to pick cokernuts an' shoot pigeons to make a pigeon pie."

"An' while they was a-shootin' pigeons up came Hugger Mugger, the pirut king o' the forest, an' says 'e, 'Bust me tight, Mr. Prince,' 'e says, 'if you don't chuck

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out yer mouldy coppers an' come along o' me an' my men I'll out with my crooked sword,' 'e says, 'an' make an 'orrible big 'ole in yer stummick,' an' with that 'e blowed 'is bugle 'orn, an'—wallop! hup pops the forty thieves.

"So when the prince seed as 'e weren't in it 'e give best, an' the pirut king colared the ellerfunt, an' the camil, an' the horse, an' the pony, an' the moke, an' set orph back to the pallis where the prince's father lived, pretendin' fur to be a circus. See?"

The court nodded, and Dubbins, with a cautionary "Nancy, don't wiggle," continued his story.

"Soon as the pirut king was gorne, hup jumps the prince, an' draws 'is sword, an' sez 'e, 'Now, me men,' 'e sez, 'there's only twenty o' these bloomin' theeves left,' 'e sez, 'an' let them larf as wins'; an' with that 'e pitches into 'em a treat, 'cos he wasn't afeered o' nothing nor nobody, an' bein' a prince, was bound fur

to die game, an' no hunkin', which is *my* way, an'—

“You Winkie!”

The court trembled and turned pale. Dubbins glanced out of the tail of his eye in the direction of his happy home, situate at the far end of the yard.

The hail was repeated in a high voice, thin, shrill, and stridulous :

“You *Wink*-ie.”

“Hal-loo,” shouted Dubbins Rex.

“You jes skip this way, an' fetch yer father's beer, or you'll cop the bloomin' earache, d'ye tumble?”

Dubbins arose, shook himself with kingly dignity, and strode off down the yard.

The court dispersed in various directions, all save Nancy—she was left “wiggling.”

II

Maugre, “The Glories of Harriet Chicken,” and “The Beds of Romance,” the heyday of my fairy-time did not

arrive until early in my ninth year. I had then just learnt to read, and my mother bought me every week a penny number of Grimm's *Goblins*, then being issued in serial form. I cannot recall any keener literary pleasure than that afforded by those weekly treats of the Brothers Grimm. Not even *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which followed soon after; not the serial, *Robinson Crusoe*, which my brother now possesses; not *Sartor*, nor *The Conscript*, nor *Hamlet*, nor *Æschylus*, nor *Plato*, nor *Tristram Shandy*, in later years so charmed and held me. At last I had come into my inheritance; at last my laggard feet had crossed the enchanted border; at last I was in Fairyland, and the glamour thereof filled my eyes, and the "Little People" bound me in their gossamer spells; at last I could read books for myself, and the scope and power of my new accomplishment came upon me as a revelation.

The children of this present generation are blest indeed in the matter of story-books. In my childhood paper was dear, and popular illustration was, so to speak, in its Flint Age. Our Grimm had pictures, crudely drawn, printed from rude wooden blocks, and coloured—in smudges of red, yellow, and blue—by hand.

Nowadays, for less than the full price paid for our Grimm I can buy a handsome volume of fairy tales, finely printed on good paper, bound in cloth and gold, and illustrated with more than a hundred beautiful drawings by Millar or Robinson. There were no such books when I was a child. There was no Caldecott, no Kate Greenaway, no Alice Havers. But now is the age of wonderful books and toys, and the child is king.

Are the new fairy tales as good as the old? Only our children can judge. The glamour of lang syne must put us grown-ups out of court. How can I

arbitrate, at my time of life, between the Grimm's *Goblins* I revelled in at nine and the new story-book I buy to-day for Dolly, and in which nothing appeals to me but the excellence of the illustrations?

There is, however, one story-book of recent date about which an oldster may be allowed a word, and that is the charming, original, much-read, much-quoted, and too-much-imitated *Alice in Wonderland*.

Alice, being a book in the modern spirit, may well and fairly be compared with the fairy tales of Andersen. Both books are excellent in their way, and, if I give the palm to Andersen, it shall not be by virtue of early love, but on grounds of maturer study, for I have had two Andersen periods—one at nine and one at forty. My first visit to *Wonderland* was paid, I think, when I was twenty-four. And now, let us compare the old book and the new, first placing it to the credit of Lewis Carroll that my younger

daughter—who is deeply read in fairy lore—has been right through *Alice in Wonderland* eight times, which I think beats my own record for *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Emerson, with his quiet smile, tells of a man who wrote a criticism of the Lord's Prayer. It was an act, one would think, not forced upon the man by Fate, unless he were a Scotsman. Being myself a mere man of Kent, I cannot help feeling that to build a house, to plant a tree, or to make two kind thoughts blossom in some earthly corner which hitherto has borne but one, would be a better service to one's fellow-vagrants on life's arid and lean highway than the perpetration in cold blood of a criticism of *Iolanthe*, or *Alice in Wonderland*, or the drama of "Punch and Judy." And yet, since *Alice* is by far the most popular of recent fairy books, one may be forgiven for contrasting it with the fairest and bravest of its predecessors.

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Rightly to define, *Alice* is not a fairy tale at all; but a dream story. It is grotesque rather than romantic, witty rather than humorous, and, like Gilbert's libretti, more of an essay in Topsy-turvydom than an adventure into the dreamy Land of Makebelieve. It bears to the fairy tale proper the relation which adroit conjuring bears to magic. It is a brilliant exhibition of acrobatic fancy; not a dramatic illusion. There is no deception, ladies and gentlemen. Alice does not really go through the looking-glass; her neck does not really grow; the black queen is only a kitten. The figures are droll, dance deftly, and speak their startlingly original lines trippingly on the tongue; but they are only marionettes cunningly contrived. You can see the wires. They are the quaintest and funniest of marionettes, and the showman has the prettiest of wits. But there is no illusion—none of the glamour of the old fairy tales and folk legends.

A Book about Books

The author is in a freakish mood, and gives his queer fancies the rein, but it is all play; and the audience, though often tickled into laughter or surprised into admiration, are never touched with awe, nor charmed to wistfulness, nor moved to pity. No round-eyed child asks, breathlessly, "Is it really?" No grown-up child catches himself straying softly into a dreamy reverie as under Chopin's spell. There is no more shadow to the picture than in *Pinafore* or *The Mikado*.

Hans Andersen tells of the Wild Swans, or the Snow Queen with naïve gravity and simple good faith, and children of all ages listen in the same spirit to history as it should have been. Lewis Carroll's work has the gossamer lightness, the sparkling gaiety, the brilliant paradox of Gilbertian comedy; but Topsyturveydom is not Fairyland, and marionettes, how pleasing soever, are none of our kin. In *Wonderland* the sky is a painted ceiling, with gems for

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stars ; in place of tender moonlight there are coloured limes ; and a laughing conjuror instead of a wonderful magician. In Andersen and Grimm the storks build on the old lichened high roofs, the wild swans fly across rushy plains and gliding rivers, the wind voices talk strangely amongst the shadowy ravines and solitary peaks of the mighty hills. Under the dim starshine and over the ghostly snow the wolf goes gliding where the black pines whisper. And the old peasant woman sits at her wheel ; and the tired woodman, axe on shoulder, plods towards the beacon of blue smoke seen above the trees, to share his soup or sausage with his simple Gretchen, and to tell of the trolls or the witches to his little blue-eyed daughter with the braided golden hair.

In *Alice* there is undoubted good-humour, but no tenderness ; in seas of the abnormal not a drop of mystery. It is like a quaint air without a bass.

Yet my little daughter has read *Alice* eight times through ; and which of us could spare the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, the Walrus and the Carpenter, or the lackey frogs, who "might sit there, on and off, for days and days"? *Alice* is brilliant, delightful, unique ; it is magnificent—but it is not Fairyland. And a good diamond highly polished is very beautiful, but not so beautiful as a full, red, musky rose.

I suppose what one misses in Lewis Carroll is the human touch and the fairy glamour. In childhood we stand in some awe of the fairies—we take our magic seriously. "There is an austere fear in our regard."

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men ;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping altogether :
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather !

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But who is afraid of the Mock Turtle, or the Slithy Toves, or the Black King? Even the Jabberwock cannot excite a shudder.

Yes, Dolly's favourite is *Alice in Wonderland*; but give me Andersen's *Fairy Tales*. What magic is in the name!

I have had, as I said before, two Andersen periods. The first of his tales I remember reading were "The Ugly Duckling," "The Goloshes of Fortune," and "The Wild Swans." The one which most delighted me, and stayed longest with me, was the story of the dung-hill beetle, who was angry because the emperor's charger wore golden shoes. Andersen had a talent for what is now called animism. He made beasts and birds, flowers and trees, coins, flagons, and broken toys talk, and talk as wittily and as pleasantly as the characters in Mr. Anthony Hope's *Dolly Dialogues*. And as a child I revelled in animism; perhaps most children do.

A Book about Books

My jealous beetle leaves the stable and encounters rain on the lawn. He is "very much out of temper about the weather," when he sees a pair of frogs squatted on some damp linen.

"What splendid weather this is," one of them cried; "how refreshing! And the linen holds the water so beautifully. My hind legs positively shake, as if I were going to swim."

"I should like to know," said the second, "if the swallow, who flies so far on her journeys to foreign lands, ever meets with a better climate than this? What charming dampness! it is almost as good as lying in a wet ditch. Whoever does not like this certainly does not love his country."

"Have you been in the emperor's stable?" asked the beetle; "there the dampness is warm and refreshing. That's the climate for me. I wish I could take it with me on my travels. Is there not a dung-heap in this garden, where a person of distinction, like myself, can feel at home?"

But the frogs did not, or would not, understand him.

"I never ask a question a second time," said

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the beetle, after he had asked this one three times without getting any reply.

In "The Happy Family" we are treated to some quiet irony in a dialogue of the great white snails—

The old white snails were the grandest in the world; they knew that. The forest was there for their sake, and the ducal palace, too, so that they might be boiled and laid on silver dishes. . . .

One day it rained very hard.

"Listen how it is drumming on the burdock leaves, rum—dum—dum, rum—dum—dum," said the father snail.

"That's what I call drops," said the mother; "it's coming straight down the stalks. You'll see it will be wet here directly. I'm only glad that we have our good houses, and that the little one has his own. There has been more done for us than for any other creature; one can see very plainly that we are the grand folks of the world. We have houses from our birth, and the burdock forest has been planted for us. I should like to know how far it extends, and what lies beyond it."

"There is nothing," said the father snail, "that can be better than here at home."

This Lamb-like gentleness of irony is one of Andersen's most salient and pleasing characteristics. I cannot remember a sneer or a bitter word in anything he wrote. Yet his irony tells, though it is so good-humoured. Like soft and fine rain, it soaks in.

Andersen's humour is still, but deep; his wit glints here and there upon his tender fancies—sudden, transient, unpremeditated, and quiet, like silver sparkles when the river dimples among cool shadows under branching trees. Here is an instance, taken from a fine passage about a bottle—

It had stood in a rank with a whole regiment of brothers and sisters, all out of the same furnace; some of them had certainly been blown into champagne bottles, and others into beer bottles, and that makes a difference. Later, out in the world, it may well happen that a beer bottle may contain the most precious wine, and a champagne bottle be filled with blacking; but, even in decay, there is always something left by which people can see what

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one has been : nobility is nobility, even when filled with blacking.

My second Andersen period came, or rather began, when I was married and had children of my own. A friend of mine found a thumb-worn, unfrocked copy of the *Fairy Tales*, and gave it me for my small daughter. One day I picked it up to look for my old acquaintance "The Beetle," and found that I had stumbled upon a treasure. Because, the fact is that Andersen's tales, bewitching to young folks, are precious to readers no longer young.

Certainly I found a fainter charm in my old favourites—the fairy tales proper ; but in the more human stories and sketches was a new joy. The style is as homely, as fresh, and sweet as a daisy chain, or a robin's song, or a dish of strawberries and cream. Of the humour I have already spoken ; the pathos is in harmony with it, being restrained, sincere. The picturesque pieces

—lightly and surely touched cameos of landscape and *genre* painting—are perfect of their kind. The themes are well chosen, well conceived, firmly and lightly handled, neither overwrought nor underdone ; never long-drawn out. Such sketches as “Good Humour,” “What the Old Man does is Always Right,” “Grandmother,” and the “Old Grave-stone,” are unexcelled of their class. They are, to use a mangled and over-worked term, “inimitable.”

As an example of thumb-nail sketching, let us take the opening paragraph of “The Fortress Wall”—

It is autumn : we stand on the fortress wall and look out over the sea. We look at the numerous ships and at the Swedish coast on the other side of the Sound, which rises far above the mirror of waters in the evening glow. Behind us the woods stand sharply out ; mighty trees surround it ; the yellow leaves flutter down from the branches. Below, at the foot of the wall, stand gloomy houses, fenced in with palisades. In these it is very

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narrow and dismal, but still more dismal is it behind the grated loopholes in the wall, for there sit the prisoners—the worst criminals.

There is composition in that small picture—there is feeling, there is a fine “atmosphere.” I never read that passage without thinking of Heine’s poem “From the Ramparts” in the translation of James Thomson—

My heart, my heart is mournful,
Yet joyous shines the May;
I stand by the linden, leaning,
High on the bastion grey.

The blue town moat thereunder
Glides peacefully along;
A boy in a boat is angling,
And whistling a careless song.

Beyond, like a well-known picture,
All small and fair, are strewed
Houses and gardens and people,
Oxen and meadows and wood.

The maidens bleach their linen,
And dance in the grass for glee;
The mill wheel scatters diamonds,
Its far hum reaches me.

The two landscapes have a like charm, are drawn with a like simple but unerring art, are instinct with similar sentiments. One hardly knows which to prefer.

Of the larger and more serious stories perhaps the best are "The Bottle Neck" and "The Old Bachelor's Nightcap." These are novels in miniature, and, before we agree to the confident American claim that Bret Harte invented the short story (as if *The Luck of Roaring Camp* were senior to *Pickwick*), we shall do well to consult our Andersen. If "The Old Bachelor's Nightcap" is not a good short story, I am a false knave. It is Mr. Gilfil's "Love Story," and many another man's love story, done in a few pages—done by an artist, tenderly, faithfully, sweetly, without flaw or falter. It is not, perhaps, a tale to charm the children from their play; but it cannot fail to draw the old man from his chimney corner.

And what about the varied scenes in the human panorama called "What the Moon saw"? And what of the odd adventures of those who wore the goloshes of fortune, and of the subtle Rip-Van-Winkle-like change of period? (By the way, did Washington Irving follow Bret Harte?) And how often does one of our largest-circulating magazines capture a story as good as that of the man who lost his shadow?

I have given so much attention to Hans Christian Andersen that I can barely mention Grimm. But, after all, Grimm is for the children only, and they do not require directions from mere professional literary sign-posts to guide them to what they want. Much as I enjoyed Grimm's *Goblins* forty years ago, I cannot read it now. The stories are excellent, of course, but the telling lacks the charm and distinction of the Danish artist.

And the modern writers of fairy tales?

They know not Joseph, nor does Joseph know them. But some of the Irish folk-stories are excellent—may I say “stunning”? Thanks. See “The Soul Cages” and “Teig O’Kane and the Corpse” in Mr. Yeats’ selection. And there was a book of my boyhood called *Peter Wilkins* which completely captivated my brother and me, which no boy ought to miss. It is *Peter Wilkins* to which Leigh Hunt alluded when he regretted that it had been left to a mere prose writer and not a poet to invent a “flying woman.”

Has science killed fairy tales? I think not. Science is a vast store of food for the imagination. The *Origin of Species* is the strangest and greatest tale of transformation ever told, and the flying people of *Peter Wilkins*, the diamond valley of “Sinbad the Sailor,” and the aërial palaces of “Aladdin,” must all pale their ineffectual fires before the splendour and romance of the

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sidereal galaxy. When I want fairy tales now I go to the geologist, the chemist, and the astronomer. It is no bad bargain to get the boundless and dazzling magnificence of the universe in exchange for the dainty fancy and wistful elusiveness of THE LITTLE PEOPLE.

OF THE POOR OLD PUBLIC

MANY authors and critics seem to treat a long-suffering Public as certain heathen are said to treat their idols: alternately flattering and beating them. Hardly a "silly season" passes but we are regaled with shoals of articles and letters upon the deplorable deterioration in public taste. Apparently we swing into these annual showers of pessimism and censure much as the earth swims into the fiery rain of the Leonids. And, happily, the public pays about as much attention to one phenomenon as to the other.

We have just passed through our literary Leonids again, and some few wild whirling meteorites have fallen and exploded in my immediate vicinity.

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Amongst these is a Parisian complaint of the vogue of stories of adventure. Psychological fiction has but a meagre following, says the French critic; and this is to be deplored, as it shows deterioration of the public taste—an increasing sense of unrest and a greediness for sensation which are symptoms of spiritual declension.

Poor old public taste; it fails as signally as do its favourite authors to satisfy the critics. But is the love of adventure a sign of moral sickness? Or is the present demand for novels of action abnormal? There has been always a public zest for romance and adventure. What were the books of Defoe? What were the Waverley novels? What were the romances of Alexandre Dumas? If the demand to-day for books of adventure is abnormal, we need not look far for a reason. Modern life is tame, monotonous, and sordid, and those who read for rest and recreation would fain

be carried into an imaginary life more vivid, more virile, more picturesque, and less materialistic.

It is good to open windows through which we may see environments and humanities foreign to our ken. It is good to be reminded now and again, and in a picturesque, vivacious way, that there are blue skies as well as grey, palm trees as well as "planes, grassy prairies as well as smoky streets, black skins and brown as well as white, turbans as well as pot hats, scimitars and rifles as well as golf-sticks and umbrellas, wild lions as well as tame cab-horses, a South as well as a North, an East as well as a West, old civilisations as well as new. It is wholesome to be shown, in a verbal panorama of rich colour, strange forms and glittering ironies, that the Nonconformist Conscience does not rule the entire world; that whole races of quick, ardent, human men and women know not Brixton, nor Manchester, nor

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the *Times* newspaper, nor Mrs. Grundy, nor the English constitution, nor Samuel Smiles, nor Joseph Chamberlain, nor *The May Queen*, nor the Worshipful Company of Bellows - Menders, nor Lindley Murray, nor the Albert Memorial,—no, not even *The Clarion*.

For my own part, I have a capacious literary maw, and take any kind of fare the gods send, provided it be of sterling quality.

Adventure stories! Why not? Are we to turn ungrateful backs on *Quentin Durward*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gil Blas*, *Midshipman Easy*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Lorna Doone*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, *Treasure Island*, and *Kim*? And what are we to put in their place? Shall we say *Robert Elsmere* and *Sir Richard Calmady*?

No. We will not give up our stories of action, nor yet our novels of thought. We will continue to read Kipling as well as Henry James. I, for one, will

persist in taking all the joy I can get out of books, and will contrive to enjoy a rousing good drama of pirates and storms and deeds of derring-do, and to season it with *The Church of Humanity* or *The Sacred Fount*.

When I was a small boy I had a favourite story called *The Arctic Crusoe*, in which two or three mariners, frozen up in an ice-bound and inaccessible fastness, take it in turns to read aloud from a copy of a three-year-old newspaper. Over and over they read the sheet, until the woman drunk and disorderly in Bow Road, the fire in Camberwell coalyard, the mysterious discovery of a child's body at Wapping, and the great speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at Basingstoke, acquire an almost epic value, and are read in solemn rhythmic cadence, like the battle-pieces in Homer.

Ah, it *was* a book, that; and I still remember the zest with which I read of the sailor lad marooned upon a sandy

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shoal in the North Sea, and how he eked out a precarious existence on seaweed and the eggs of the eider duck. Something like the mariner in the song Johnny Toole used to sing, who during an arctic winter wittled—

On petroleum and frozen periwinkles.

And of the comic German purser who got surrounded by arctic foxes, and had to play reels and jigs to them all night on his fiddle to save himself from being gobbled up alive. And how I admired the marvellous precision with which the hero shot polar bears, and the fascinating, delightful, beautiful, and impossible Indian girl who was rescued from an iceberg or a walrus, or some other furious monster, to fall in love with the hero, to save his life, and to get shot in the last chapter out of deference to Saxon race-pride. I recall all these incidents and persons with mingled delight and regret.

I cannot believe that my taste for the

Arctic Crusoes was unhealthy, nor can I remember that such books ever did me any harm.

And I do not see why the poor old public should be flouted for preferring *The Prisoner of Zenda* to *Hedda Gabler*. Yet the public is never safe from the gibes of men of letters.

Here, for instance, is the great Tolstoy railing at the public's want of taste. In his introduction to *The Peasant*, Count Tolstoy says—

Within my recollection, in fifty years, there has been wrought this amazing decline of the general taste and the common-sense of the public. This corruption is easily traced in every branch of our literature. . . . The ignorance of our educated circles is such that the truly great thinkers, poets, and prose-writers, whether of antiquity or of the nineteenth century, are regarded as stale and out-of-date, incapable of satisfying the high and refined demands of the present generation; we either patronise these masters, or frankly dismiss them with a contemptuous smile.

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This seems to me to be hardly fair to the poor old public. Nor does it quite explain the immense increase of books and papers. There are more books and papers now than there could be when we were boys. This is due to two chief causes. Firstly, to the increased demand arising from the spread of elementary education ; secondly, to the cheapness of paper and the invention of rapid printing presses.

There is more rubbish sold as books to-day than ever before ; but there never has been so great a sale for the best literature as there is now.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, I hear, has sold enormously, and so has *Sir Richard Calmady* ; but what about Dent's Temple Shakespeare, what about the innumerable new editions of English and foreign classics now appearing ? Frankly, I do not believe there were ever so many lovers of real literature, in this country at anyrate, as

there have been within the last ten years.

No; don't let us be unjust to the public, nor ungrateful. It is a generous public, and will read good literature when it can get it. But let us bear in mind one or two of its difficulties.

The new public is not rich, and is busy. So it cannot afford six-shilling novels, nor costly editions of classical works, nor has it time to seek and sort; but is perforce obliged to open its mouth and shut its eyes and take what the cheaper houses send it. Then, again, the poor old public is full of business, generally tired, and mostly in a hurry. It reads not, as the cultured and leisured classes read, for information and refined enjoyment, but by way of relaxation, of respite from care, of escape from worry and the sordid scramble and moiling of the modern work-a-day world. Its poor dear head is too weary for subtle and fine irony, humour, reasoning. It wants

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to be thrilled or interested, or tickled into laughter or tricked into tears without much mental effort. Its leisure is fragmentary, so that it craves for scrappy literature. It reads in its brief meal-times, or in the trains, and likes short pars., fugitive jokes, condensed news, stories or essays that can be read betwixt the stations. It is a restless, worried, anxious public—much troubled with brain fag, liver complaint, and ennui; and it craves for gin and whisky and racing lists and the coarse intoxication and swift oblivion of sensational literature and loud melodrama. It is a hard-working, long-suffering, patient, and withal absurdly grateful and good-humoured public, and deserves to be fed cheaply and generously and tactfully upon the choicest of the “dainties that are bred in a book.”

If I had my way it should have the finest literature, and the finest music, and the finest drama, and the finest

art, and the purest, healthiest, and best relaxation and recreation of every kind at the lowest possible rates.

Of course Count Tolstoy is a great author, and a great man, and may be allowed, after the manner of great commanders, to "be rude to the privates." But we don't want every little corporal of letters to be bullying the rank and file.

It annoys one to see some fifth-rate author turn up his nose at the public which feeds him on champagne and truffles and pudding and praise—the public to whom he owes his leisure, his money, his villa, his silk hat, his very shirt studs, and his inordinate conceit. He ought to love the public, and honour it, and serve it humbly and gratefully with his poor best, as his masters did, and do.

Let the critic and reprover of public taste ponder well the following extract from a dialogue between an English and

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a Chinese author. I cut it from *Black and White*, and have kept it for some years—

“But you have books in China?” I suggested.
“Who writes them?”

“It is different with us,” he answered. “We do not begin as young men by writing. No one writes a book until he has gained money in his Government office or in his profession. Then, perhaps, when he is rich and has leisure—but not till then—he thinks of an idea which he would like to communicate to his fellow-countrymen. So he writes a book and publishes it.”

“How many copies are printed?” asked the author.

“Perhaps two thousand.”

“And suppose the idea catches on with the public?”

“If the idea is a good one, and more people wish to learn it, some one will print the book again, and publish it in another part, and so on until it has gone through the whole country.”

“Without the leave of the writer?” asked the author.

“He has no more concern with it when it is published,” replied the Chinaman. “He would

not earn money in that way. He has communicated his idea, and that is his reward."

"Well, I'm damned!" said the author.

Perhaps those who so condemn our poor old British public will admit that they manage some things better in China. The author in this dialogue appears to have had doubts.

OF HOLY LIVING AND DYING

ROMEO was a young man, and there is a good deal in a name. Tell the next friend you meet that Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* is an excellent bed book, and he will look at you "with an austere fear in his regard, as though calamity were just begun." *Holy Dying*—it does not sound inviting, does it? And yet it is only the name that is fearsome; the book is well enough. The style is always good, and often beautiful; and the teaching has the interest and attraction of a treatise on witchcraft or astrology; that is to say, it brings vividly to our mind's eye the

faiths, hopes, and terrors of a bygone age.

Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore, was born at Cambridge in 1613, his father being a barber in that town. He was a wonderful boy; took a sizarship at Caius College when he was thirteen, was master of arts at twenty, and was admitted to holy orders before he came of age. At twenty-three he was given a fellowship at All Souls, Oxford, and became Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King Charles I., and two years later he was preferred to the rectorship of Uppingham. He was driven from the rectory by the Parliamentarians, and was made bishop after the Restoration. He died of fever, in Ireland, in 1667.

Basil Montagu, in his *Thoughts of Divines and Philosophers*, gives copious extracts from the sermon preached at Jeremy Taylor's funeral by George Rust, Bishop of Dromore; and from

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these extracts I shall quote here as much as will serve to show us what manner of man the author of *Holy Dying* was. Bishop Rust says—

He was born at Cambridge, and brought up in the free school there, and was ripe for the University before custom would allow of his admittance ; but by the time he was thirteen years old he was entered into Caius College, and as soon as he was graduate he was chosen fellow.

He was a man long before he was of age, and knew little more of the state of childhood than its innocence and pleasantness. From the University, by that time he was master of arts, he removed to London, and became public lecturer in the Church of St. Paul's, where he preached to the admiration and astonishment of his auditory ; and by his florid and youthful beauty, and sweet and pleasant air, and sublime and raised discourses, he made his hearers take him for some young angel, newly descended from the visions of glory. The fame of this new star, that outshone all the rest of the firmament, quickly came to the notice of the great Archbishop (Laud) of Canterbury, who would need have him preach before him ; which he

performed not less to his wonder than satisfaction. His discourse was beyond exception, and beyond imitation ; yet the wise prelate thought him too young ; but the great youth humbly begged his Grace to pardon that fault, and promised, if he lived, he would mend it. However, the grand patron of learning and ingenuity thought it for the advantage of the world that such mighty parts should be afforded better opportunities of study and improvement, than a course of constant preaching would allow of ; and to that purpose he placed him in his own college of All Souls, in Oxford ; where love and admiration still waited upon him ; which, so long as there is any spark of ingenuity in the breasts of men, must needs be the inseparable attendants of so extraordinary a worth and sweetness.

Funeral sermons, like epitaphs, do not often damn with faint praise ; but there is corroborative evidence sufficient to prove that Jeremy Taylor was a man of no ordinary worth and genius. To return to Bishop Rust—

Nature had befriended him much in his constitution, for he was a person of a most

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sweet and obliging humour, of great candour and ingenuity ; and there was so much of salt and fineness of wit, and prettiness of address, in his familiar discourses, as made his conversation have all the pleasantness of a comedy, and all the usefulness of a sermon. His soul was made up of harmony ; and he never spoke but he charmed his hearers, not only with the clearness of his reason, but all his words, and his very tone and cadences, were strangely musical.

But that which did most of all captivate and enravish, was the gaiety and richness of his fancy ; for he had much in him of that natural enthusiasm that inspires all great poets and orators ; and there was a generous ferment in his blood and spirits, that set his fancy bravely to work, and made it swell, and teem, and become pregnant to such degrees of luxuriancy as nothing but the greatness of his wit and judgment could have kept it within due bounds and measures. . . .

And now you easily believe that an ordinary diligence would be able to make great improvements upon such a stock of parts and endowments. But to these advantages of nature, and excellency of his spirit, he added an indefatigable industry, and God gave a plentiful

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benediction ; for there were very few kinds of learning but he was a great master in them. He was a rare humanist, and hugely versed in all the polite parts of learning ; and had thoroughly concocted all the ancient moralists, Greek and Roman, poets and orators ; and was not unacquainted with the refined wits of the later ages, whether French or Italian. . . .

He was a person of great humility ; and, notwithstanding his stupendous parts, and learning, and eminency of place, he had nothing in him of pride and humour, but was courteous and affable, and of easy access, and would lend a ready ear to the complaints, yea, to the impertinences, of the meanest persons. His humility was coupled with an extraordinary piety ; and I believe he spent the greatest part of his time in heaven ; his solemn hours of prayer took up a considerable portion of his life ; and we are not to doubt but he had learned of St. Paul to pray continually ; and occasional ejaculations, and frequent aspirations and emigrations of his soul after God, made up the best part of his devotions. But he was not only a good man Godward, but he was come to the top of St. Peter's gradation, and to all his other virtues added a large and diffusive charity ; and whoever compares his plentiful

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incomes with the inconsiderable estates he left at his death, will be easily convinced that charity was steward for a great portion of his revenue. But the hungry that he fed, and the naked that he clothed, and the distressed that he supplied, and the fatherless that he provided for ; and the poor children that he put to apprentice, and brought up at school, and maintained at the University, will now sound a trumpet to that charity which he dispersed with his right hand, but would not suffer his left hand to have any knowledge of it.

The England of that day surely had cause to congratulate herself, amongst all her troubles and distractions, on the possession of such a divine as Jeremy Taylor, such a lawyer as John Selden, such poets as Herrick and Milton, and such prose masters as Sir Thomas Browne, John Bunyan, Hobbes, Dryden, and Fuller.

For Jeremy Taylor was contemporary with these men, and also with Samuel Rutherford, the Scots divine, Evelyn, and George Herbert.

Of generals, admirals, and statesmen, also, there was a great wealth in the world at that time, for, during the manhood of Jeremy Taylor, Oliver Cromwell waxed and waned, and the Dutch, under Van Tromp and De Ruyter, gave us as good on the seas as they have lately given us on the veldt.

Jeremy Taylor served both the Charles's, and lived and worked through all the turbulence and vicissitudes of the Civil War. He was five years of age when Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded, thirteen when Lord Bacon died, three when Shakespeare died, and himself passed away just two years before the birth of Daniel Defoe.

I have said that Jeremy Taylor's style is always good, and often beautiful. It is, I think, of greater excellence in *Holy Dying* than in *Holy Living*, or, at anyrate, the former book is richer in "purple patches." Bishop Rust is critically justified in declaring that

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Taylor's fancy was the most "captivating and ravishing" quality of his style. His imagery was original and splendid, and was conveyed in sentences of singular simplicity and directness. Here, for instance, is a comparison of man's life to a day's progress of the sun—

Some are called at age at fourteen, some at one-and-twenty, some never, but all men late enough, for the life of a man comes upon him slowly and insensibly. But as, when the sun approaches the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye to heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brow of Moses, when he was forced to wear a veil, because himself had seen the face of God ; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly : so is a man's reason and his life.

And here, also from *Holy Dying*, is a passage in which the rose is used as a symbol of life's declension—

It is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us who are alive. Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth, and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five-and-twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb's fleece ; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age ; it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of the weeds and outworn faces.

In Lowell's "My Study Windows," in a criticism of the prose of Dryden,

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Lowell compares a passage of "Glorious John's" on the rising of the lark with one by Jeremy Taylor on the same subject. The lark passage of Dryden is from the dedication of his own version of Virgil's pastorals, and is as follows—

He found the strength of his genius betimes, and was, even in his youth, preluding to his Georgics and his Æneids. He could not forbear to try his wings, though his pinions were not hardened to maintain a long, laborious flight ; yet sometimes they bore him to a pitch as lofty as ever he was able to reach afterwards. But when he was admonished by his subject to descend, he would come down gently circling in the air, and singing, to the ground, like a lark melodious in her mounting, and continuing her song till she alights, still preparing for a higher flight at her next sally, and tuning her voice to better music.

"This," Lowell says truly, "is charming, and yet even this wants the ethereal tincture that pervades the style of Jeremy Taylor, making it, as Burke said of

Sheridan's eloquence, neither prose nor poetry, but something better than either." Lowell then quotes Jeremy Taylor's lark passage, from the Fifth Sermon—

For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds ; but the poor bird was beaten back by the loud sighing of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the liberation and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over, and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion of an angel as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below.

Lowell's appreciation of the above passage is so sound, and so neatly expressed, that I quote it here—

"Taylor's fault is that his sentences too often smell of the library ; but what an open air is here ! How unpremedi-

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tated it all seems! How carelessly he knots each new thought, as it comes, to the one before it with an *and*, like a girl making lace! And what a slidingly musical use he makes of the sibilants with which our language is unjustly taxed by those who can only make them hiss, and sing! There are twelve of them in the first twenty words, fifteen of which are monosyllables. We notice the structure of Dryden's periods, but this grows up as we read. It gushes, like the song of the bird itself—

‘In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.’”

Taylor's style is indeed, as Lowell says, a “profuse strain of unpremeditated art.” For Taylor has many graces, but no tricks of style. If his sentences sometimes smell of the library, it is because they are laden with a wealth of erudition and allusion, for he was an omnivorous reader, and culled his flowers of wisdom and beauty from

all fields, home and foreign, sacred or profane. To him, rather than to Sir Thomas Browne, should Walter Pater have given praise for "unpremeditated wild flowers of speech." His imagery is so fresh, so fluent, so artlessly expressed. His construction is that of an orator, rather than of a writer. His style is flowing, copious; with as little suggestion of any laboured device as in the gushing and sparkling of a mountain stream. His is a great style, too, for it is all his own, and bears upon its surface the imprint of his personality, like the reflection of a man's form and features seen in and through the reflected landscape in a limpid and tranquil river.

Yes; for his quick fancy, his pure thought, and his musical prose, Jeremy Taylor is entitled to a place amongst our favourite authors. And, when we come to his religion and his philosophy, he can still command our interest and sympathy, if not our agreement.

Of Holy Living and Dying

II

The philosophy of *Holy Dying* strikes me as being weak and fretful. It savours of the sick-room and the hermit's cell. It is a doctrine obnoxious to manhood and sane wholesome living, good for neither queen nor country. It accords not with the wisdom nor the courage of the East or the West, and is only saved by the eloquence of its expression from the rubbish heap. Here, in one finely-wrought passage, is the "note" of it all—

Man never hath one day to himself of entire peace from the things of this world ; but either something troubles him, or nothing satisfies him, or his very fulness swells him and makes him breathe short upon his bed. Men's joys are troublesome, and besides that the fear of losing them takes away the present pleasure, and man hath need of another's felicity to preserve this, they are so wavering and full of trepidation, not only from their inconstant nature, but from their weak foundation ; they

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arise from vanity and they dwell upon ice, and they converse with the wind, and they have the wings of a bird, and are serious but as the resolutions of a child, commenced by chance, and managed by folly, and proceed by inadvertency, and end in vanity and forgetfulness. So that, as Livius Drusus said of himself, he never had any play days or days of quiet when he was a boy, for he was troublesome and busy, a restless and unquiet man ; the same may every man observe to be true of himself ; he is always restless and uneasy, he dwells upon the waters, and leans upon thorns, and lays his head upon a sharp stone.

It is not true. I have lived hundreds of days, with never a spot of sin or a wrinkle of care in them. Have we not, many of us, swam all the morning, played cricket all the afternoon, and danced all night ? Have we not tramped through green valleys, and shady lanes, and flowery meadows, and clean villages, and past silver streams, from the first matin of the lark to the first vesper of the thrush ? Have we not sat down, gloriously tired, and magnificently

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hungry, to a hearty supper and a flagon of red wine, in some sweet old garden, under the wide roof of the dewy skies?

Troublesome joys, and thorns, and folly, and sharp stones? Are these all? What of the nightingale and the rose, the sunshine and the blue water, a cluster of old friends round the "mahogany tree"? What of a fugue of Bach, a chapter of *Pickwick*, an idyll of Theocritus, a wife's kiss, a child's caress, a possible at 600 yards, a cut for four, a good deed done by stealth, a piece of true work well wrought and happily ended?

Man never had one day of entire peace! Did a man never meet his sweetheart after a long absence, and steep his soul in bliss for a summer's day of fourteen hours' duration? Did a man never wander about London with his young wife, and see the lamplights start out like stars along the Thames, and hear the band play amongst the

trees, and feel himself back in Eden? Did a man never hear his first child's first speech, nor watch its first steps? Pooh!

Folly and moans, and ashes and bitterness! What puerility is this? The man who has heard a baby laugh, who has seen the moon rise on a Southern bay, who has spent a spring morning on the Solent, or smoked a good cigar on Goathland Moor in the starshine, or read *As You Like It*, or heard a full band play the "Ride of the Valkyrie," or Madame Stirling sing a Scottish ballad, or sailed up the river Seine, or danced at a military ball, or walked over the Chilterns, or watched the sunset from the Welsh hills, ought to give thanks that ever he was allowed to draw the breath of life.

A perfect day, indeed. I have known days when one has sighed for sheer delight of living. The fact is, we are such graceless dogs, there is little grati-

tude in us. We are surrounded with thick-crowding joys, and blessings come to us in troops, like bright angelic legions, and, like Hamlet, we are even poor in thanks. In a fair garden, under an unclouded sky, we rail at Fortune because, through our own neglect, we have no oil for the salad, or no walnuts with the wine.

And the joke of it is, that Jeremy Taylor knew these things as well as any man, as I shall show. But he had set himself to prepare his readers for death by painting life in lampblack and gall, and he would see nothing but barrenness betwixt Dan and Beersheba.

In his *Holy Living* he was under no such gloomy embargo, and we find, in section vi., the following fine confutation of his own later utterance—

But these arts of looking backwards and forwards are more than enough to support the spirits of a Christian. There is no man but hath blessings enough in present possession to

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outweigh the evils of a great affliction. Tell the joints of thy body and do not accuse the universal providence for a lame leg or the want of a finger, when all the rest is perfect, and you have a noble soul, a particle of divinity—the image of God Himself—and by the want of a finger you may the better know how to estimate the remaining parts and to account for every degree of the surviving blessings. Aristippus, in a great suit of law, lost a farm, and to a gentleman who, in civility, pitied and deplored his loss, he answered : “ I have two farms left still, and that is more than I have lost, and more than you have by one.” If you miss an office for which you stood candidate, then, besides that you are quit of the cares and the envy of it, you shall have all those excellencies which rendered you capable to receive it, and they are better than the best office in the commonwealth. If your estate be lessened, you need the less to care who governs the province, whether he be rude or gentle. I am crossed in my journey, and yet I escaped robbers, and I consider that, if I had been set upon by villains, I would have redeemed that evil by this which I now suffer, and have counted it a deliverance ; or if I did fall into the hands of thieves, yet they did not steal my land. Or I am fallen into the hands

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of publicans and sequestrators, and they have taken all from me. What now? Let me look about me. They have left me the sun and the moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me, and I can still discourse; and, unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance and my cheerful spirit and a good conscience; they still have left me the providence of God and all the promises of the Gospel and my religion, and my hopes of Heaven and my charity to them, too; and still I sleep and digest, I eat and drink, I read and meditate, I can walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all that in which God delights, that is, in virtue and wisdom, in the whole creation, and in God Himself. And he that hath so many causes of joy, and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness, who loses all these pleasures and chooses to sit down upon his little handful of thorns. Such a person were fit to bear Nero company in his funeral sorrow for the loss of one of Poppæa's hairs, or help to mourn for Lesbia's sparrow; and because he loves it, he deserves to starve in the midst of plenty, and to want comfort while he is encircled with blessings.

The philosophy of *Holy Dying* would thus appear to be a case of what Oliver Wendell Holmes called "piecrust."

But, when we come to Bishop Taylor's religion, we come to a still more fearful and wonderful thing. For Bishop Taylor believed in Hell, and in a material fire-and-brimstone Hell at that. And he believed that only those who were of his religion could escape Hell, so that all the millions who died before the Atonement, and all the millions who did not accept the Christian faith, were doomed to burn for ever and ever in flames and torture, by the unalterable decree of the God who is love. In proof whereof I quote the following from section iv. of *Holy Dying*—

Most of the men that are now alive, or that have been living for many ages, are Jews, heathens, or Turks ; and God was pleased to suffer a base, epileptic person, a villain and a vicious, to set up a religion which hath filled all the nearer parts of Asia, and much of Africa,

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and some part of Europe ; so that the greatest number of men and women born in so many kingdoms and provinces are infallibly made Mahometans, strangers, and enemies to Christ, by whom alone we can be saved : this consideration is extremely sad, when we remember how universal and how fresh an evil it is, that so many millions of sons and daughters are born to enter into the possession of devils to eternal ages.

It seems impossible to us, in these days, that any sane man could have ever accepted a doctrine so merciless and unreasonable. Yet it is not so very long since that doctrine lost its power, and there are many men alive to-day whose childhood was made horrible, and whose minds were weakened, by the insistent threats held over them of an almost inevitable Hell.

But, apart from the intolerance and the dread which were so prominent in the religion of his time, Jeremy Taylor's teaching in *Holy Dying* is un-

healthy. He seems to have held the belief—not common to himself, and still existent—that none but pious Christians could know how to die; the fact being that this dreadful Hell of the Christians had invested death with most of the terrors it possessed, and that pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and sinners met death with a calmness and a dignity which very few devout Christians could display.

Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying* is itself a monumental example of the Christian's fear of death—that death which the sinful soldier or sailor, the unsaved Oriental, and the old Roman heathen have met with such gay fortitude and smiling contempt.

In this book Bishop Taylor teaches that life is not worth living, that there is no such thing as earthly happiness, and that our only serious business in this world is to prepare for the inevitable death. Here is an example—

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He that would die well must always look for death, every day knocking at the gates of the grave, and then the gates of the grave shall never prevail upon him to do him mischief. This was the advice of all wise and good men of the world, who, especially in the days and periods of their joy and festival egressions, chose to throw some ashes into their chalices, some sober remembrances of their fatal period. Such was the black shirt of Saladin; the tombstone presented to the emperor of Constantinople on his coronation day; the bishop of Rome's two reeds with flax and a wax taper; the Egyptian skeleton served up at feasts; and Trimalcion's banquet in Petronius, in which was brought in the image of a dead man's bones of silver, with spondyles exactly turning to every one of the guests, and saying to every one that you and you must die, and look not one upon the other, for every one is equally concerned in this sad representment. These in fantastic semblances declare a severe counsel and useful meditation; and it is not easy for a man to be gay in his imagination, or to be drunk with joy or wine, pride or revenge, who considers sadly that he must ere long dwell in a house of darkness and dishonour, and his body must be the inheritance

of worms, and his soul must be what he pleases, even as a man makes it here by his living good or bad.

What kind of courage or wisdom is this? We are to make ourselves miserable for threescore years, so that we may be able to bear at last the pang of a moment.

We have got to die. Well? Is that a reason why we should be afraid to live? I like far better the manliness of Socrates, who described virtue as consisting in contempt of death; and of Carlyle, who said, "If a man has to be damned, let him be damned with dignity, and not howl about it."

Compare the nervous dread and shivering sadness of Jeremy Taylor's religion with the sound sense and manly courage of Marcus Aurelius—

What a small part of immeasurable and infinite time falls to the share of a single mortal, and how soon is everyone swallowed up in eternity! What a handful of the uni-

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versal matter goes to the making of a human body, and what a little of the universal soul, too! And what a narrow clod with respect to the whole earth do you crawl upon! Consider all this, and reckon nothing great, unless it be to act in conformity to your own reason, and to suffer as the universal nature shall appoint you.

The great business of a man is to improve his mind, therefore consider how he does this. As for all other things, whether in our power to compass or not, they are no better than lifeless ashes and smoke.

We cannot have a more promising notion to set us above the fear of death, than to consider that it has been despised even by the sect who made pleasure and pain the standard of good and evil.

He that likes no time so well as the fitting season, he that is indifferent whether he has room for a long progress in reason or not, or whether he has a few or a great many years to view the world in, a person thus qualified will never be afraid of dying.

Hark ye, friend! You have been a burgher of this great city; what matter though you have lived in it five years or three? If you have

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observed the laws of the corporation, the length or the shortness of the time makes no difference. Where is the hardship, then, if Nature, that planted you here, orders your removal? You cannot say you are sent off by a tyrant or unjust judge. No; you quit the stage as fairly as a player does that has his discharge from the master of the revels. But I have only gone through three acts and not held out to the end of the fifth. You say well; but in life three acts make the play entire. He that ordered the opening of the first scene now gives the sign for shutting up the last. You are neither accountable for one nor the other; therefore retire well satisfied, for He by whom you are dismissed is satisfied too.

Let us take every honest joy our life can yield, and make the most of all, and be thankful for all. Let us be as good as we can, and as happy as we may, and let us do our utmost to bring goodness and happiness within the reach of all, and let us leave the rest to the lords of life and death. But to mope and snivel all our lives because all our efforts and pains and joys must

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end in sleep, seems to me a cowardly and a foolish teaching. As old Omar says—

And if the wine you drink, the lip you press,
Ends in what all begins and ends in—yes’;

Think, then, you are to-day what yesterday
You were—To-morrow you shall not be less.

So when that angel of the darker drink
At last shall find you by the river brink,

And, offering his cup, invite your soul
Forth to your lips to quaff—you shall not
shrink.

I recommend *Holy Dying*, then, for two reasons—first, because it is beautifully written ; and, secondly, because we cannot read it without feeling thankful that a religion so dreadful, and a philosophy so timorous, as those of Jeremy Taylor’s day, can no longer cast their chill and gloom upon our children’s young and happy lives, and that we are surely, if slowly, learning to care more for the happiness of our fellow-creatures, and to wail and tremble less for our own salvation.

OF CHILDREN OF THE IMAGINATION

A FRIEND of mine, on the School Board, startled me recently by remarking that she had "found a man who understands children; the first who ever did."

The first man who ever understood children! That looks like a mere verbal extravagance. And yet, how many of us do understand children? Not many. Even of those authors who put children into their books, how many are convincing? I should not like to promise lightly to find one thoroughly natural child in literature. So few of us really understand children.

Does it not seem strange? We have all been children ourselves, and are

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constantly in touch with children in our lives; have children of our own, perhaps. Surely we should know what children are like. If we do know, how comes it that we fail?

There are very plausible and charming children in Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Mark Twain, and Brontë. But their truth to nature is not steadily sustained. Jerome K. Jerome, Kenneth Graham, and Robert Louis Stevenson, amongst our newer writers, have displayed skill and tenderness in the delineation of childhood; but is there not always a subtle something lacking? Is there one child in fiction who is entirely and always childish?

If our authors fail, it is because they study children from the outside, as though they were birds or flowers, instead of searching back through their own memories for the records of what they themselves once did and were and suffered, or ever they

came to grips with the world, and forgot to remember.

We shall realise this more fully if we try to get our adult feet into the ankle-straps of babyhood, and to look at men and things as we looked at them when our cheeks were blooming and the whites of our eyes were blue. Come; let us think of things as they were wont to be.

The child has no past—no future. You and I have clean-cut, bitter-sweet remembrances of lovings and likings, of winnings and losings, of errors and triumphs and follies many. We have looked into old books and old buildings; into women's eyes, and into the graves of friends and relatives. We have seen success spring out of failure, like roses on a tomb. We have known friendship prove feigning, and loving mere folly. Our hearts are seared with many scars, our souls have not kept themselves quite unspotted from the world; our minds

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are stored with memories as thickly as the shelves of a library are stored with books. We find every case we come to deal with encumbered with precedents, as though the world were a Court of Chancery, and the whole stupid, blundering, reasoning crowd of us were pedants and lawyers wigged and gowned. And our future: is it not as crowded and as anxious as our past? Yes; and as we look towards it we see a picture which, whether or not it be a mere mirage, is full of definition.

But when we were children it was not thus. We forgot our brief past with frank cynicism, and faced our future with saucy coolness and sublime indifference. What was behind the stage curtain at pantomime time was a question of breathless interest; but, as for the characters and situations hidden by the curtain of the mysterious time to come, the thought of those, if we ever thought of them at all, would not have

hastened our dancing pulse one beat, nor clouded our bright open eyes with a momentary shadow. In all such matters we lived from hand to mouth, with a happy heedlessness that belongs only to children and to fairies.

Children have no idea of the duration of time, nor of the value of money, and their sense of locality is unfixed and undeveloped. They would be not one whit surprised, nor interested, if told that London was near Russia, or Baden in the County Down. The advent of a snowstorm, and a visit from Father Christmas in the Dog Days, would be accepted as calmly as would one-and-ninepence change for a sovereign, or five sovereigns change for half-a-crown.

It is a long way—a vague, vast distance—from “our house” to the duck-pond ; but the children have no conception of greater spaces, and would start out as cheerfully to walk to Japan as to the post-office.

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Then their own smallness gives them an impression of surrounding objects quite alien to our grown-up understandings. The village street looks wider to a child than Trafalgar Square looks to us. A boy of sixteen is a giant; a woman is an overwhelming force; a bed has to be climbed into, and may be fallen out of; a cochin-china cock is a fierce creature of dubious intentions, whose red wattles and curved beak reach breast-high. The child perforce looks up at things the man looks down upon. The child has some dread of bears and lions, but really stands in more terror of a cow; he fears a dragon or an ogre, but not so much as he fears a policeman.

A child has but a dim conception of the need or usefulness of work. The business of his life is to play, and he is prone to think meanly of the grown-ups for wasting their time and frivolling away their opportunities. There is a

toffee-shop still in the Westminster Bridge Road, outside of which I registered a vow that when I was a man I would buy as many lemon jujubes as I could eat.

The functions and limits of law and authority are unknown to the little people. They accept a policeman as an embodiment of boundless and arbitrary power. Asked why he did not hit back a boy who had hit him, a wee man replied, "His father's a pleeceman." And a wee lassie once astonished me by inquiring, "Which is *worst*—a giant, a burglar, or a pleeceman?"

To a child the boundaries of fact are dim and unfixed. He cannot draw a precise line betwixt the real and the imaginary.

Familiar things are strange to him, and within his ken the impossible becomes the commonplace; for his fancy is as active as his knowledge is small. In the child-mind, business, history, and

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mechanics are empty terms ; but griffins fairies, bogies, lions, talking wolves, flying witches are accepted facts, and mermaids "common objects of the sea-shore."

George the Third, Julius Cæsar, and Catharine of Aragon are tiresome bores, or foolish myths ; Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Jack the Giant Killer, and Whittington's Cat are the real and interesting historical personages.

The dears know and care nothing about Shakespeare, Darwin, Plato, and Stephenson ; the Civil War, the electric telegraph, or the Parish Councils ; but they are deep in the mysteries of Indian battle, piratical customs, the etiquette of Spooks and Brownies, and the habits and haunts of the great Roc and the Irish Banshee.

Children are all actors—all romancers. They live in a world of their own, wherein we grown-ups are trespassers—the wonderful Land of Makebelieve.

They scalp Indians behind the dahlias, and hunt bears in the lobby while the maid is washing the oilcloth. They are lords and ladies, smugglers, soldiers, savages, trains, ghosts, or wild animals, most of their waking hours. They like to be anything but themselves. They will be pirate kings or generals, and have their ears boxed "without prejudice." They will suspend a desperate Indian raid to run in for a slice of bread-and-jam; they will stop roaring as a lion to call out "Yes, ma," and will then go on roaring again as it will do any man's heart good to hear them.

And they believe nearly everything they are told.

It may seem paradoxical, yet it is true, that a child understands a great deal less and a great deal more of our talk than we suppose.

When I was a child I would sit silent, listening to what the elders said, and repeating it to myself. I did not under-

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stand it—then ; but I had a relentless memory, and I never forgot the words or looks that puzzled me. Thus it came to pass that a score of years later I would suddenly be startled into laughter by some stored-up verbal puzzle jumping down off memory's shelves and standing revealed before my grown-up intelligence.

Children are sadly puzzled by abstract ideas. Dolly told me of some baby trouble, and I said I was sorry. "What is that sorry?" she asked me; "what is that word sorry?" She did not know, and I could not make her understand.

My brother's son related once how in a dream a big man came "damning" at the door. He meant knocking, I think, but the word damn was associated in his mind with violence. A little girl, a terror for queer speeches, once said to her mother—I was then about eight—"Ma, you do look pretty to-night. Your hair is done up so nice—like a harlot's."

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A child gives strange words strange meanings. I used to think the word million meant a big umbrella. When the teacher spoke to the class of "our forefathers" I could only realise the forefathers as a string of little, top-hatted, short-legged men cut out of newspaper, and all holding each other by the hand in an unbroken and illogical row. Such mental pictures play havoc with one's lessons. How could I be properly shocked about Henry the Eighth when I didn't know what a wife was, but always connected the word with the idea of a white-handled dinner knife?

A child's questions bowl you all over your wicket, its unpremeditated speeches leave you answerless and bewildered. Here is a string of posers given to me by Dolly. "Did *I* come out of a strawberry bed? Did Corri? Why didn't we come strawberries? How did the doctor know we was there? How did

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he know ma wanted us? Did you see me when I camed? Was my face dirty? Didn't the dirt get into my eyes? Why didn't it?"

Another time. "Do the flowers go to sleep at night? How do they know when it's time to get up?"

Another time. Corri is looking out of a railway carriage window, when he startles me by asking, "Dad, would you raver wheel a barrow up a board or go to sleep in the hay?"

My brother's grown-up daughter tumbled over little Phyllis' cat. "I'll *kill* that cat," said Annie. "You won't," said Phyllis; "it's my cat." "Well," said Annie, "there are plenty more cats." "Well," whimpered poor Phyllis, "you needn't waste 'em."

"My dad is *clever*," said Corri, one day when I had successfully mended a boat. "P'raps some day my dad'll *get to be a porter!*" Corri thought that would be great promotion. Nor was I

so much surprised when I found that he believed the porters owned the whole railway system, except the engines, which were the property of the engine-drivers.

Mrs. Meynell is right. Children make words if their stock runs out. My Winnie used to call flowers "wonnies," and demanded drink by the word "limmy." One of my cousins, now an actor, called his shoes "coigny," and nonplussed his friends by yelling for "a blinder" when he wanted a drink. His mother was surprised that we failed to understand him.

A child's power of expression is limited. Being sent for a pound of black treacle, and forgetting the name, but remembering that I had not to bring the best quality, I astonished the shopman by asking for "a pound of the *worst* treacle." My brother, being sent for some ink and sharply requested "not to be a month," astonished *his*

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shopman by slapping down a coin on the counter, with the terse command, "A penny bottle of ink ; and don't keep me a month." Dolly, asking me to brush her hair, said, "Please make it like yours. Make a *path* down the side."

I am not sure whether there is not a good deal of make-believe in a child's fear. I once saw a bogie in a malt-house in Stafford. I saw him, and I believed in him, and I did not run away. I was fascinated with the glory of the discovery, and I and two other tots spent many an hour in futile and disappointed watchings for his reappearance.

"Did you see the Calythumpian in the cellar, Bobby?" a friend of my mother's once asked me. "No," said I, eagerly, "but I almost saw him ;" and so I did, and was sorry I had not seen him quite.

Robert Louis Stevenson, in his

Child's Garden of Verses, dwells with much fondness on this imaginative quality of the childish nature, and such gems as "The Pleasant Land of Counterpane" and "My Bed is a Boat" would be ill to lose. There is another poem in the same volume which so cleverly expresses the child's real dread of *the dark* that I cannot resist quoting from it here—

All round the house is the jet-black night :
It stares through the window pane ;
It crawls in the corners, hiding from the light,
And it moves with the moving flame.

.
The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of
the lamp,
The shadow of the child that goes to bed—
All the wicked shadows coming, tramp, tramp,
tramp,
With the black night overhead.

I know those shadows: which of us
has not known them, and the fear of
them?

I cannot close without a thought for the

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little creatures I have seen peeping like caged animals through the barred balconies of the hideous London tenement houses, or playing in the horrible London courts; and as it would be no book of mine without a sad note in it, take this, you who love children and feel so keenly all the sorrow of that dolorous city.

In the first year of the *Clarion* I had many painful experiences: one of them was a visit to a workhouse school—described in *Dismal England*. Here the children had been separated from the paupers, and were boarded and lodged in a terrible kind of children's barrack, where the matron and the master did their best, being wise and kindly people, but could not find parentage, friendship, and counsel and sympathy, and love and kisses, for six hundred boys and girls.

As we crossed a bridge from one building to another, Mr. Birkby, the master, said something about a fish-

pond, adding, "We do not catch fish here, but we catch a good many mice."

"Have you many mice?" I asked.

"Yes," said he, with a peculiar smile; "there is hardly one of our big boys but has a live mouse in his pocket."

"A live mouse! What for?"

"Well," said the master, "human nature is human nature, and the little fellows want something to love. Some time ago the inspector cautioned a boy about putting his hand in his pocket, and ordered him to be still. The boy repeated the action, and, as I guessed what was the cause, I called him out. He had a live mouse in his trousers pocket, and was afraid of its climbing out and showing itself in school. He took it out on his hand. It was quite tame."

I said, "Oh." There was no more to be said. As we observe on the press, "comment would be superfluous." The poor little wretches!

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The most affecting thing I saw was a curious demonstration of the infants as we crossed their playground. Released from the restraint of parade discipline, these little creatures, girls and boys between three and seven years of age, came crowding round us. They took hold of my hands, several of them taking each hand; they stroked my clothes, and embraced my legs. Some of them seemed fascinated by my gold watch-guard (it is rather loud), and wanted to kiss it. I gave one the watch to play with—my own children have often used it roughly—and his little eyes dilated with admiration. These eerie mites followed us right up to the barrier, and shook hands with us.

“That,” said Mr. Birkby, “is a peculiarity of all workhouse children. They will touch you. They will handle and kiss any glittering thing you have about you. It is because you are from the outside world.”

I have met many children in life and in books, and have loved some of them right well. But the boy baby with the tame mouse, the child who "wanted something to love," and the wee dears who received me—the strange visitor from the world beyond the wall—as we read of savages receiving wonderful white men from lands far over sea,—these little creatures still walk darkly with me.

No; trust me, if we grown-ups fare but indifferently in our attempts at drawing children, it is not because we do not know, but because we cannot remember.

OF BOLD ROBIN HOOD

WHETHER the Robin Hood traditions are wholly fact or chiefly fiction is a matter of little moment. Maybe King Arthur, his Round Table, his knights and their high achievements, are "dreams out of the ivory gate and visions before midnight." Maybe Robin Hood, his merry men, his trysting tree, and all the stout battles and saucy depredations of Barnesdale and the green Sherwood are but tales told in a chimney corner, rhymes born of the vagrant fancy of some metre ballad-monger of old time. We are told that William Tell did not shoot the apple from his son's head, that Blondel never sang under Richard's dungeon window, that the Duke of

Wellington never uttered the words, "Up, Guards, and at them." Those can believe such historical pruderies who will. For my part, I decline to surrender every pretty fragment of picturesque detail "calculated to lend artistic verisimilitude to a bald and uninteresting narrative." My Blondel *did* sing, my William Tell *did* hit the apple, my Iron Duke used the exact words, "Up, Guards, and at them."

So with Robin Hood. A man, if only mean enough, may imagine him to have been a common ruffian, whose prowess with the longbow by no means equalled that of his chroniclers. For my part, I prefer to take him as I find him, and I find him, according to all the best traditions, a most picturesque figure, moving amid noble scenery, and doing deeds of gallantry and kindness. There were so few men in his day who spoke words of ruth to the poor, who were superior to base temptations, to malice and revenge,

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that it were a shame to blot this one bright soul out of the gloomy picture and leave nothing else but savagery, treachery, and vile lusts for us to look upon.

So we will hold fast to Robin Hood, and his merry men, and his Maid Marion, and his bravery and mercy, and we will take him as he stands, and believe in him, not without gratitude.

Robin Hood, the popular idol, was Earl of Huntingdon. Being outlawed for debt, he took refuge in Sherwood Forest, where he gathered round him a band of bold yeomen and good archers, who lived merrily on the king's deer and such of the king's subjects as ill-luck brought their way—the clergy preferred. Robin's most famous qualities are his skill with the bow, his manliness and daring, and his courtesy to women and kindness to the poor.

Rich men, sheriffs, lawyers, abbots, and friars Robin Hood robbed and punished rigorously ; the law he defied. The

ballads tell us so, and the ballads were made by the peasantry, who hated the rich and the clergy, and held the vile and cruel laws in fear and detestation. But Robin never behaved unknighly to any woman, and the toll he took from the heartless rich he freely bestowed upon the poor. In his rough way, and according to the crude minstrelsy of the unschooled maker of ballads, Robin Hood is a poor man's King Arthur, and Little John, Will Scarlett, and Allin-a-Dale are his Launcelot, his Gawaine, and his Tristan. After their fashion, these men went forth errantly to succour the weak, rescue the oppressed, and do honour to the fair. In their history is enshrined the chivalry of the peasantry of England ; and it must be owned that, if Robin Hood and his men fall below the Round Table standard of dignity and splendour, they certainly have the advantage of Arthur's ponderous knights in point of humour.

Of Bold Robin Hood

Ritson's *Robin Hood* was first published in 1795. There is a good edition, with glossary, life of Robin Hood, and notes and introduction by Joseph Ritson, published in Routledge's Excelsior Series at 2s. The book is chiefly interesting for the curious glimpses it affords of English life and thought in the twelfth century. There are some three-and-thirty ballads here, exclusive of the appendix. But many of these ballads appear to be variants of one or more themes. Artistically, the ballads cannot be accorded high rank. Compared with the Scots Border ballads, they look homely and crude indeed. The stories do not show much imagination, invention, or dramatic power, the manner is mostly common and uncouth, and a large proportion of the verse is mere doggerel. Yet the ballads possess, in places, a quality of freshness which redeems them, and makes them readable and even pleasant.

There is a shrewd relish of the old English spirit in Ritson's book. In the twelfth century war had not been emasculated by peace societies nor debased by villainous saltpetre. The yew bow and the clothyard shaft, so dear to William Morris, were the national weapons, and English yeomen fought for sheer exercise and love of the game.

Then the king's warrant went armed *cap-à-pie*, and the grey goose carried the stern reply of the bold outlaw or sturdy peasant. Then hills were green and forests wild; the lean wolf had not been hunted into realms of fairy lore, and the deer moved kingly and free through valley and glade. Then lusty yeomen, skilled in archery and cunning in music, had in them some salt of humour, and held life sweet enough for pleasure and cheap enough for risk. Then ale was brewed and not concocted; then jokes were free, and every goodman was his own defence and every goodwife her

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own factor. Then Manchester was a small fortress, perched on a breezy rock in the fork of a limpid river, and no man had seen a reeking shaft nor a Hooligan journal ; and Jeremy Bentham and Malthus were undreamed of.

There is little scenery in the Robin Hood ballads, but what there is is freshly fair. The trees, the birds, and the flowers, the sunshine and the forest, are painted with bright tenderness and artless art. The atmosphere is perfect, the colour gay, and all is wholesome, with an honest feeling for wide horizon and open air.

In summer when the shawes be sheyne,
And leaves be large and longe,
Hit is fulle mery in fayre foreste
To heare the fouly's song.

To see the deer draw to the dale,
And leave the hilles hee,
And shadow hem in the leaves grene,
Under the grene wode tre.

That is a fair example of the old

balladist's skill in landscape. Here is another—

When shawes been sheene and shraddes full
fayre,

And leaves both large and long,
It's mery walkynge in the fayre foreste
To heare the small birdes song.

The woodweele sang and would not cease,
Sitting up on the spraye,
So loud he wakened Robin Hood,
In the greenwode where he laye.

The characters fit the scene. They are all frank heathen, these bold outlaws, whose loves were warm, whose tempers were quick, whose swords were loose in the scabbard. Love of good cheer, of bright eyes, of greenwood and throstle, of deep breathing and hard blows, is bred in the bone of the merry men of the Robin Hood ballads.

No one could write such ballads now; we are too sophisticated. No one can paint those old English yeomen and outlaws as they were. There have been

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many attempts ; but none successful. We get a more satisfactory idea by allowing our imaginations free play amongst the old chronicles, the old tales and records of forestry and archery, and the rude songs and ballads of the bygone time. The bowmen of Morris are too grave and virtuous ; those of modern romancers are stagey and unconvincing. Here in Ritson's preface and the Robin Hood ballads we have suggestions of the real greenwood, the real archer ; the real sheriff, outlaw, ranger, beggar, priest. Here we have no Wardour Street armour, no bookish diction, no weapons from the museum ; but the bluff manhood, the swift choler, the quaint humour, the boisterous spirits, and the eager prowess of Will Scarlett, Much the Miller, the Nottingham tanner, and the Friar of Fountaines Dale.

The ballad-maker loves Robin Hood after the blunt old English sort. He does not make him always victorious ;

indeed the favourite joke in the ballads is the discomfiture of the bold forest hero by some lusty stranger of low degree. Probably all, or nearly all, the defeats the verses chronicle are variants of one tale. Certainly there is a strong resemblance of one and all the ballads of "Robin and the Potter," "Robin and the Beggar," "Robin and the Tinker," "Robin and the Tanner," "Robin and Will Scarlett," "Robin and Little John," "Robin and the Curtal Friar."

Robin Hood's method of recruiting his forces was peculiar. Let him meet a lusty fellow, or hear of a yeoman that is a good man of his hands, and off goes the outlaw chief to try his mettle in a practical way. Then if he finds the stranger his match he winds his bugle horn, calls up his merry men, and asks his late opponent to join the band. The finest of these recruiting ballads out and away is the ballad of the Cur-

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tal Friar. It begins with the following pleasant picture—

In summer time, when leaves grow green,
And flowers are fresh and gay,
Robin Hood and his merry men
They were right fain to play.

Robin thereupon sets them to shoot deer. Little John shoots with such skill as causes the captain to exclaim that he would ride a hundred miles to find Little John his match. Then Will Scarlett laughs full heartily, and declares that there lives a curtal friar in Fountaines Abbey who is capable of trouncing both Little John and his master—

The curtell fryer in Fountaines Abbey
Well can a strong bow draw,
He will beat you and your yemen,
Set them all on a row.

This made Robin rise like a trout at a fly. He armed himself to the teeth, and set out to find the friar walking by the water side.

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The fryer had on a harnesse goode,
On his head a cap of steele,
Broadsword and buckler by his side,
And they became him weele.

Fancy the curate of St. Eanswythe-
in-the-Hole going out in such a rig!
There were men in those days; and
those men had humours, for now, as we
follow the old ballad, our lungs will be
tickled o' the sere—

Robin Hood lighted off his horse,
And tied him to a thorne;
“Carry me over the water, thou curtell fryer,
Or else thy life's forlorne.”

Do you think the curtal gentleman cut
up rusty? Not at all. Those monks
had humour in them—

The fryer took Robin Hood on his backe;
Deepe water he did bestride,
And spake no word, or goode or bade,
Till he came to the other side.

But when he had landed his man the
friar showed his metal.

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Lightly leapt Robin offe the fryer's backe ;
The fryer saide to him againe,
"Carry me over this water, fine fellow,
Or it shall breede thy paine."

At this point Robin appears to have grasped the idea, and decided to humour the joke—

Robin Hood took the fryer on his backe,
Deep water he did bestride,
And spake no word, or good or bade,
Till he came to the other side.

As soon as he had scrambled ashore bold Robin him spake, and the solemn old game of spoof continued—

Lightly leapt the fryer offe Robin Hood's backe,
Robin Hood saide to him againe,
"Carry me over this water, thou curtell fryer,
Or it shall breede thy paine."

The artful friar said neither ay nor no. He took up his man and waded in ; but this time stopped half-way—

And coming to the middle streame,
There he threw Robin in ;
And chuse thee, chuse thee, fine fellow,
Whether thou sink or swim.

Thus was Master Robin spoofed. The earliest game of spoof on record.

Of course there was a great fight, and, as usual, Robin, finding he had met his match, called up his band and begged the friar to join. Whether or not the friar did join, the ballad does not clearly state ; but I should fancy he did, and that this jestful, artful, lusty monk was none other than our old favourite, Friar Tuck.

But is not that account of the outlaw and the friar horsing each other back and to across the brook, a piece of delightful dry humour? Ah! Merrie England was merry in those days—although there were no cotton mills.

Yes, men had humour then. Take for proof this extract given by Ritson from Harrison's *Description of England*. Speaking of the decay of archery since gunpowder was invented, the old author says—

Certes, the Frenchmen and Rutters deriding our new archerie, in respect of their corslets,

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will not let in open skirmish, if any leisure serve, to turne up their tailies, and crie, "Shoote English"; and all because our strong shooting is decaied and laid abed. But if some of our Englishmen now lived that served King Edward in his warres with France, the breech of such a varlet should have been nailed to his bum with one arrow, and another feathered in his bowels, or ere he should have turned about to see who shot the first.

Is that picturesque? Does it not bring home to us the old warlike spirit and grim horse-collar wit of the men who fought at Crecy? Yes, and there is character in this verse about Little John—

Robyn stood in Bernysdale,
And lened hym to a tree,
And by hym stode Lytell Johan,
A good yeman was he.

Than bespake hym, Lytell Johan,
All untoe Robyn Hode;
Mayster, yf ye wolde dyne betyme,
It wolde do you moch goode.

I grant you that our ancestors were a "leetle teeny bit bloodthirsty," and

that their ideal of hard fighting, hard drinking, rich feeding, and straight shooting was not a high one. But taking them by and large, without committing such an unphilosophical offence as lifting them out of their day and judging them by our code, I maintain that they were manly, brave, and merry fellows, and that their company as shown to us in the Ritson ballads is always interesting and often pleasing.

Of the other ballads (my favourite is the "Curtal Friar"), the best are the "Lyttle Geste" and "Allin - a - Dale." That of "Guy of Gisborne" is marred by the savagery of the poet, who has certainly libelled Robin Hood by representing him as acting in a manner contrary to all tradition, and against the spirit of the other ballads.

OF UNSUCCESSFUL HUSBANDS

THE argument as to whether men of genius make good husbands always puts me in mind of an old friend's whimsical proposition: "Ought flute-players to drink gin?" Why flute-players? Why men of genius?

I am sceptical as to the man of genius being less blessed in wedlock than his even Christian. Doubtless it were easy to produce sheaves of unhappy marriages in which one of the sufferers was a genius. But would it be more difficult to discover flies in the conjugal ointment of the majority?

Suppose counsel for the other side, with more zeal than generosity, suggests

that very few fortunate marriages are enshrined on the annals of genius, might I not honestly retort upon him with a *tu quoque*? What is the percentage of Darbys and Joans amongst the population of Europe? How many Men in the Street are eligible for admission to that "Brotherhood of Unsuccessful Husbands" which another friend of mine once threatened to establish? Confronted with this "combination of staggerers," learned counsel smiles enigmatically, "Does not know."

Precisely. He does not know, I do not know; you do not know, we do not know; he, she, it, and they does and do not know. "It is one of those things no fellah can find out." *That is my case.*

We know nothing of the domestic amenities of the Man in the Street. We never shall know. He is not tracked, shadowed, and interrogated by fatuous Paul Prys or Peeping Toms of

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the press. No damned good-natured friend turns his privacy, seamy side out, when he is dead. No biographical Sherlock Holmes goes about to recover the wind of him by bribery and cross-examination of his discharged servants, disappointed legatees, jilted sweethearts, envious acquaintances; nor, by cajolery of his wife's relations, or her bosom friend, to fish up splenetic reminiscences. No sentimental Judas publishes his love-letters. Under his obscure coverlet of green grass and silver daisies he may lie still in peace, like Tom Hood's

Child, who bids the world good-night
In downright earnest, and cuts it quite.

It is a case of "Happy low lie down." Not until the last trump sounds shall any previous conviction be brought up against him.

But the man of genius—poor wretch—having been hated, fêted, starved, bullied, spied upon, lied upon, flattered, envied, criticised, misunderstood, mis-

represented, and generally befooled and bedevilled during his life, is dragged, often by his dearest friend, to the bar of public opinion, and is there tried, found guilty, and sentenced, without being able to speak a word in his defence, to question a witness, or to call a bishop, a cabinet minister, a duke, a charwoman, or other respectable person, to speak to his previous good character.

Talk about unsuccessful marriages! If the genius could appear in court, or even instruct counsel, how often might the verdict be reversed? If the Average Man had to go into the dock, how often would Hymen be put to the blush for him?

I do not think that the genius is more of a connubial frost than any other Benedict. He is more spied upon, and blown upon—that is all. Quite recently I read in my morning paper an account of a case in which a Frenchman sued for a divorce on the ground of his wife's

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damnable iteration (Shakespeare) of the superiority of her sex. This woman's "rights," too stridently and repeatedly insisted upon, had become at last the husband's wrongs. Poor fellow, he failed of his relief, and was laughed at for his pains.

That man's marital tribulations will soon be out of mind. Already I have forgotten his name. But how many centuries will pass ere the blanket of oblivion hides the records of the unsuccessful fellowship of Xantippe and Socrates? Myriads of men since Socrates have marred a wife's temper and rendered life a misery to her by over-kindness. Myriads of wives since Xantippe brawled have come to have their husbands in derision for being gentlemen, when they were expected to be brutes.

Matrimony is an art, and the successful wife or husband is born as well as made. Some have a positive genius for

married life, and it is too much to ask of Nature that these lucky ones should be dowered also with a genius for poetry, for music, or for philosophy.

Your really successful husband, being safe from the roaring vortex of penury, has a golden opulence of poetry, music, and beauty in his home, his wife, and his children.

Men like Shakespeare, Socrates, Carlyle are greatly blessed. But the normal man, well married, has more reason to thank the gods. Glory is a proud bride, but Happiness is a more agreeable wife. Fame is harder to catch than Love, and less well worth the catching.

The author of *Realmah*, with ironical humour, suggests that a man of genius should be allowed at least nine wives, and thus divides their duties—

1. The arch-concocter of salads.
2. The sewer-on of buttons.
3. The intelligent maker of bread-sauce.
4. The player of Beethoven's music.

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5. The player of common tunes : " Old Dog Tray," " Early in the Morning," " Pop goes the Weasel," and " Paddle your own Canoe"—all of which tunes I think beautiful.

6. The consoler under difficulties.

7. The good reader.

8. The one beloved wife (dear deluded creature) who always believes in her husband, and takes him to be the discreetest, most virtuous, and most ill-used of men mortal. I do love her !

9. The manager of the other wives.

So! In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom. But, in the multitude of wives? When the Scots lassie, in the old song, asks her Jamie to "marry her and take her ower to Germany with him alane to dwell, the canny James speaks words of wisdom. Says he—

I dinna see how that can be, lassie,
I dinna see how that can be, Jenny,
For I've a wife, and bairnies three,
And I doot ye'd no agree, lassie.

I doot they would not. But nine wives !

One man marries too soon, another too late ; one loves his wife too much, another not enough. One marries in haste, and repents at leisure ; another marries at leisure, and does not repent at all. One woman takes a husband because he is a big man, and finds he is a big brute ; another takes a husband because he is clever, and finds he is a fool.

Mr. and Mrs. Green married when they were very young, and wrangled through twenty wretched years before they understood one another. If they had waited five or ten years longer, each might have married some other person and never come to an understanding "so long as they both shall live."

Bouncer "puts his foot down" during the honeymoon, and Mrs. Bouncer kneels at it ever after. Lamby does not put it down in time, and is hen-pecked till the end of the chapter. Quibly does put it down, and Mrs.

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Quibly throws the sardine dish at his head.

That "awful ass," young Sunly, against his friends' forebodings, marries that "tomboy of a Smith girl," on the strength of her pretty face, and sets up housekeeping on nothing a year. And the house is a house beautiful, and luck sits on its hearthstone. And the awful ass makes money, and the tomboy girl makes sunshine. And the ridiculous, reckless, impossible pair are brother and sister, husband and wife, comrades and playmates—friends, helpmates, and lovers, from first to last. Their ways are ways of pleasantness, and all their paths are peace. They have taken marriage gaily, thoughtlessly, as a lottery, and they have drawn the richest and fairest prize that all the world can offer. Wealth, fame, genius, are sounding brass compared to the music of their wedded lives. They are happy. They go through life like two merry children,

dancing hand in hand down a flowery lane in the sunshine of an endless holiday. The gods will have it so. Like flies, they kill or cherish us, for their sport.

See how the Fates their gifts allot,
For A is happy, B is not.
Yet B is worthy, I dare say,
Of more prosperity than A !
Yet A is happy !
Oh, so happy !
Laughing, ha ! ha !
Chaffing, ha ! ha !
Nectar quaffing, ha ! ha ! ha !
Ever joyous, ever gay,
Happy undeserving A.

It's a droll world, my masters. But some of the couples who get into the Divorce Court would not appear to have come there through excess of intellect.

Carlyle is continually quoted as an awful example of an unsuccessful husband of genius. I should like all those who have read Froude's *Life of Carlyle* to read a reply to it, called *Mr. Froude*

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and Carlyle, by David Wilson, published by Heinemann.

This book pleased me immensely. I had always felt that Carlyle had been wronged, and Mr. Wilson's defence appears to me to be triumphant.

To read Froude's *Life of Carlyle*, one might imagine genius to consist of a prodigious faculty for giving pain, and I will not be so rash as to assert that a husband of genius may be managed as easily as a husband whose mental activities are not sufficiently vigorous to impair his digestion or edge his nerves.

The most comfortable husband for a normal woman is a healthy, wealthy, amiable man, whose ideas are not sufficiently numerous to cause trouble by interfering with his pleasures, or making war upon his wife's prejudices and her friend's conventions.

The man who, being a genius, has not only married a wife, but has also "married and endowed the State," stands

convicted of a form of bigamy, which, unless his wife be tactful and unselfish, may breed him pain.

Art is a jealous mistress, and woe betide the man of genius if his wife be jealous too. Besides, there is more goes to the making of a true marriage than mere bread and cheese and kisses. Where the bodies are mated and the minds divorced there will be flouting. As to understand poetry a man must have in him something of the poet, so to understand genius a woman needs herself be gifted. With the normal man it is often easy sailing. The old rude rule, to "feed the brute," serves well, for a good stomach is as essential to domestic happiness as a good heart. But the genius little loves the fleshpots. His most urgent need is to be let alone, and the art of letting alone is one not often compassed, save by clever women.

Genius, having extra duties, should have extra privileges. It is unfair to

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ask a Carlyle, in the midst of a great work on the French Revolution, to listen to small sarcasms upon the next-door neighbour's bonnet ; nor should an Isaac Newton, busy weighing worlds, be held too strictly to the duty of squiring his wife to the play. But, though great men may be less opulent of small favours and cheap attentions, there must be in them heights and deeps that will prove ample compensation to the woman who has enough of love and wit to search them. Doubtless Horatio Nelson would be more difficult to live with than Midshipman Easy ; but doubtless he would be better worth the trouble. And where the genius fails to make his wife happy, may not the failure often arise from the fact that most women equip themselves to deal only with simple and small men ? As though, going forth to angle for grayling, one should hook a salmon.

Now, if the captain of a Thames lighter by chance got charge of an

ocean steamer, and ran upon the Cas-kets, we should not say that big ships were not fit to cross the ocean, but only that skippers who took command of big ships should be capable seamen.

Moreover, I suspect much odium has been cast upon men of genius by the matrimonial antics of men who are not geniuses at all save in their own conceit. It is the little, fussy, restless clevernesses who are always talking art with a capital A, whose inordinate vanity, self-love, and laziness wreck their wives' happiness and bring discredit upon their betters.

The artistic temperament, as manifested in a disrelish for self-discipline and steady work, has been used as a mask for disreputable vices, base brutalities, and mean evasions of duty.

To the half-washed Bohemian, facile, glib, or dexterous, who makes his skill or talent an excuse for countless gluttonies and infidelities, too much latitude is allowed by decent men

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and women. A man may be pardoned for lounging all day in gossip at the fountain, if his words be winged for two thousand years of flight ; he may be pardoned some absent-mindedness, untidiness, or rudeness, when his pre-occupation presages a "Hamlet," a "Messiah," or a "Principia"; but to offer the world a third-rate rondeau, landscape, or novel in expiation of the contemptible sins of bullying his wife, betraying his friend, and swindling his tailor, is a piece of impertinence as gross as his assumption that he is too great an artist to get his hair cut or change his linen. Let a man do his duty first and show his paces afterwards. Only a rich man can afford to dress badly ; only a great man can afford to leave unpaid the small change of courtesies and obligations.

For my part, I am loth to think evil of such men as Socrates, Carlyle, and Nelson. I will not believe, except upon

the most conclusive evidence, that such men are boorish or selfish or dishonourable. I do not believe that, where the great man has turned out an unsuccessful husband, the fault is not compounded largely of misfortune.

OF SAMUEL SMILES AND SELF-HELP

I ONCE asked a well-known Labour leader, a man of talent and some culture, what he thought of *Self-Help*, and he answered me, with characteristic vigour, "It's a brutal book ; it ought to be burnt by the common hangman." And on my demanding his reasons for this mediævalish rigour of condemnation, he informed me that "Smiles was the arch-Philistine, and his book the apotheosis of respectability, gigmanity, and selfish grab."

Socialists commonly speak of Smiles in that key, and I was once as unjust as any. Indeed, it was because of my intention to confute the individualism of

Smiles by citing examples of unselfish heroism and devotion from his own book, a design which necessitated a close study of *Self-Help* and its preface, that I came to change my mind, and resolved to attempt some defence of the author of a book I have read with profit and delight.

Self-Help is one of the most delightful and invigorating books it has been my happy fortune to meet with. It has done me nothing but good, nor can I conceive how it should do harm to any. So far from signing its death-warrant, I would advise its adoption as a reading-book in our schools, and would recommend it to the youth of these islands as a safe and efficacious mental tonic.

Samuel Smiles has been misprized and misrepresented very unfairly. He is no Philistine, but a most charming and honest writer; he does not inculcate snobbery and selfishness, nor does he glorify giganity and successful grab,

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and very many of his heroes are men to thank God on. Indeed, no sensible and fair man will attempt to maintain the unjust theory of the Philistinism of Samuel Smiles after making a study of his work.

What is the gospel according to Smiles? It is strikingly similar to the gospel according to Carlyle, and rests upon precedents laid down by many of the world's wisest and best men.

Is it alleged that Smiles pays homage to success only, and to success in the ignoble enterprise of wealth-heaping and power-snatching? Such supposition has not the smallest foundation of fact to rest upon.

Cæsarism is human idolatry in its worst form—a worship of mere power, as degrading in its effects as the worship of mere wealth would be. . . .

Nothing is more common than energy in money-making, quite independent of any object higher than its accumulation. A man who devotes himself to this pursuit, body and soul,

can scarcely fail to become rich. Very little brains will do ; spend less than you earn, add guinea to guinea ; scrape and save, and the pile of gold will gradually rise. . . .

It is the *love* of money, not money itself, which is "the root of evil"—a love which narrows and contracts the soul, and closes it against generous life and action. Hence Sir Walter Scott makes one of his characters declare that "the penny siller slew more souls than the naked sword slew bodies." It is one of the defects of business, too exclusively followed, that it insensibly tends to a mechanism of character. The business man gets into a rut, and often does not look beyond it. If he lives for himself only, he comes to regard other human beings only in so far as they minister to his ends. Take a leaf from such men's ledgers, and you have their life. . . .

Worldly success, measured by the accumulation of money, is no doubt a very dazzling thing, and all men are naturally more or less the admirers of worldly success. But though men of persevering, sharp, dexterous, and unscrupulous habits, ever on the watch to push opportunities, may and do "get on" in the world, yet it is quite possible that they may not possess the slightest elevation of character,

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nor a particle of real goodness. He who recognises no higher logic than that of the shilling may become a very rich man, and yet remain all the while an exceedingly poor creature. For riches are no proof whatever of moral worth ; and their glitter often serves only to draw attention to the worthlessness of their possessor, as the light of the glow-worm reveals the grub.

Those words are taken from *Self-Help*, the work of Samuel Smiles, the "arch-Philistine" and inculcator of greed and grab. They are not isolated sentiments torn from the context, but are truly typical of the general tenor of the book. I could quote many examples of a like kind. Thus, speaking of a man who began by shovelling coals and begging a dinner, and ended by growing rich, our author says—

He proceeded by degrees to undertake larger transactions, until at length he became rich. The result was that he more than recovered his possessions, and died an inveterate miser. When he was buried, mere earth went to

earth. With a nobler spirit, the same determination might have enabled such a man to be a benefactor to others as well as to himself. But the life and its end in this case were alike sordid.

Clearly, then, Samuel Smiles is no mean worshipper of wealth. Neither is he the "apostle of gignanity." As thus—

"Respectability," in its best sense, is good. The respectable man is one worthy of regard, literally worth turning to look at. But the respectability that consists in merely keeping up appearances is not worth looking at in any sense. Far better and more respectable is the good poor man than the bad rich one—better the humble silent man than the agreeable well-appointed rogue who keeps his gig. A well-balanced and well-stored mind, a life full of useful purpose, whatever the position occupied with it may be, is of far greater importance than average worldly respectability.

Well, then, since Smiles does not worship success, nor glorify the "gig respectability" of which he is falsely supposed to be the prophet, since he

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does not inculcate selfish grab, what *is* the gospel according to Smiles? Let Smiles answer this question in his own words—

The highest object of life we take to be, to form a manly character, and to work out the best development possible of body and spirit—of mind, conscience, heart, and soul. This is the end ; all else ought to be regarded but as means. Accordingly, that is not the most successful life in which a man gets the most pleasure, the most money, the most power of place, honour, or fame ; but that in which a man gets the most manhood, and performs the greatest amount of useful work and of human duty. . . .

But to regard self-culture either as a means of getting past others in the world, or of intellectual dissipation or amusement, rather than as a power to elevate the character and expand the spiritual nature, is to place it on a very low level. To use the words of Bacon, "Knowledge is not a shop for profit or sale, but a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate." . . .

Truthfulness, integrity, and goodness—qualities that hang not on any man's breath—form

the essence of manly character, or, as one of our old writers has it, "that inbred loyalty unto virtue which can serve her without a livery."

In those passages we have the key to "the gospel according to Samuel Smiles," and a very wise and pure gospel it is, teaching us to do our duty manfully, to make the best of our faculties and opportunities, and to be diligent and faithful in the doing of good deeds.

The road of human welfare lies along the old highway of steadfast well-doing. . . .

Our own Wellington was a far greater man [than Buonaparte]. Not less resolute, firm and persistent, but more self-denying, conscientious, and truly patriotic. Napoleon's aim was "Glory"; Wellington's watchword, like Nelson's, was "Duty."

What is there in these sentiments to send Smiles' grand book to the hangman? Where is the snobbery, the Philistinism, the glorification of greed and grab? "The men of England,"

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says Smiles, "are, after all, its greatest products." Are those the words of a Philistine or a snob?

As to the charge of inculcating selfishness, let me quote from the preface to *Self-Help*—

In one respect, the title of the book, which it is now too late to alter, has proved unfortunate, as it has led some, who have judged it merely by the title, to suppose that it consists of an eulogy of selfishness—the very opposite of what it really is, or at least of what the author intended it to be. Although its chief object unquestionably is to stimulate youths to apply themselves diligently to right pursuits—sparing neither labour, pains, nor self-denial in prosecuting them—and to rely upon their own efforts in life rather than depend upon the help or patronage of others, it will also be found, from the examples given of literary and scientific men, artists, inventors, educators, philanthropists, missionaries, and martyrs, that the duty of helping oneself, in the highest sense, involves the helping of one's neighbours. . . .

The object of the book briefly is, to reindulcate these old-fashioned but wholesome lessons—

which perhaps cannot be too often urged—that youth must work in order to enjoy ; that nothing creditable can be accomplished without application and diligence ; that the student must not be daunted by difficulties, but conquer them by patience and perseverance ; and that, after all, he must seek elevation of character, without which capacity is worthless and worldly success is naught.

This being the purpose of the book, the next question we have to consider is the question of how far the purpose is fulfilled ; and here again our author comes off with flying colours, for the young man must be of a sluggish temperament indeed who is not roused to enthusiasm and emulation by the text of *Self-Help*. The style is virile, nimble, and picturesque ; eloquent and striking passages abound ; and the examples, culled from the life-histories of all sorts and conditions of men, would shame a sluggard into action and inspire a *faineant* with hope and courage. From the first page to the last the book

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marches, and the reader cannot help but fall into step. The sayings of the heroes quoted ring in the ear like the blare of trumpets, the firm but glowing sentences of the author stir one's blood like the throb of drums.

The reader is invigorated and cheered, filled with hope and spurred to emulation by the recital of the heroic efforts and achievements of a hundred famous men. One cannot resist the desire to work hard and to work well as one reads how Sharples, the Yorkshire blacksmith, unschooled and without help, taught himself to paint and to engrave, how he bought his first steel plate and made his own tools and worked at it in his leisure hours for five years; how Cobbett, when a private soldier, taught himself grammar by the firelight, using a piece of board on his knee as a desk; how Sir William Herschel, while employed as an oboe player in the Pump Room band at Bath, made a telescope,

and used to steal away during intervals in the performance to take a look at the heavens; how Stephenson taught himself arithmetic and mensuration while working night-shifts as an engine-man in a coal-mine, working his sums with a piece of chalk on the sides of the waggons; how Elihu Burritt learned eighteen languages in "odd moments" snatched from the anvil; how Sir Isaac Newton wrote his chronology fifteen times over; how Hale for many years studied sixteen hours a-day; how Palissy, Wedgwood, Heathcote, Jacquard, and many others used failure and defeat as stepping-stones to success; how John Hunter, Buffon, Dalton, and other men of different creeds, classes, nations, and trades, made their pleasure of toil, each doing the work of many hands and heads; how Lord Lyndhurst described a difficulty as "a thing to be overcome"; and how by dint of industry, patience, and unfailing fortitude a host of heroes

showed through their own achievements that his words were true.

With Socialism or without it, and whether or not Smiles is wise or his gospel sound, yet it is certain that good work is a thing to be done; and because *Self-Help* is, of all the books I know, best calculated to inspire and encourage men to do it, I claim that the book is one to be read and praised, and not one to be censured or neglected.

For my own part, I have got much good and no harm from the reading of *Self-Help*. Its perusal has often forced me to industry, for very shame. I have drudged through many a long day at onerous tasks because of the example of men like Sharples and Herschel, and I cannot see how a book which has been food and medicine to one Socialist should be poison to another.

Over and above the charming style, the abundance of interesting anecdote, and the intense human and dramatic

interest of the numerous brief true histories of men's struggles and trials, failures and triumphs, the book is valuable for the wealth of its examples of stubborn perseverance and solid accomplishment. Precept is good, but practice is better. The condemned heroes of Samuel Smiles have "done things." They have showed us what can be achieved by courage and determination. Their deeds, not their words, rebuke and admonish, cheer and incite us. We cannot remember what they have done, without accusing and condemning ourselves into a state of repentance and amendment. Nothing is so valuable as a good example, and the despised and rejected *Self-Help* is a museum of examples, nearly all good.

Such biographies increase a man's self-reliance, by demonstrating what men can be, and what they can do ; fortifying his hopes and elevating his aims in life. . . .

Sometimes a book containing a noble exem-

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plar of life, taken up at random, merely with the object of reading it as a pastime, has been known to call forth energies whose existence had not before been suspected.

Self-Help is full of such "exemplars of life." It is true that in one or two cases, notably in the case of Arkwright, Smiles, in his admiration of a man's perseverance and industry, forgets to censure his faults ; but as a rule he admires few who are not admirable, and amongst his heroes are such men as Shakespeare, Milton, Washington, Collingwood, Nelson, Carlyle, Dryden, Faraday, Palissy, Hugh Miller, Walter Scott, Humphry Davy, Joshua Reynolds, Turner, Livingstone, John Howard, Francis Drake, Fuller, Beethoven, and Michael Angelo—heroes of whom no Englishman can honestly speak otherwise than with gratitude.

I do not claim the highest rank for Smiles. His book is not imperial purple, but it is honest hand-made cloth, of fine

workmanship and quaint design, and will wear well in this workaday world.

For work is a thing that is well worth the doing: roads must be laid, trees felled, bridges built, iron wrought, steel tempered, land tilled, gowns fashioned, and pigs driven to market; and the book that teaches the worth and the need of work and inspires girls and boys to the due pitch for its performance is a book to read and be thankful for.

There is no finer food, exercise, or medicine than work—not even play. And, when I speak here of work, I mean manual work as well as mental. The hand is really a part of the brain, and I hold no man educated until he has learned to do some useful work with his hands; nor can I conceive how one who lets his fingers and his muscles sleep while he cudgels his over-wrought and over-drilled brain to endless tasks can be accepted as a fully developed man. And I think there is very much to be

said in favour of the Socialist demand, that all men shall take their share of the world's work, and shall follow art or literature by way of relaxation and reward.

In Ouida's *An Altruist* one of the characters says that he cannot see the wisdom of wasting the time of Meredith or Watts upon menial tasks.

I think that is a mistake. Your painter or poet cannot regulate his output as your collier can by the number of hours he works, and though of course we should not set Adelina Patti to cry fish, nor send our best engraver to split rails, yet I doubt not but the exercise, the relief, and the training of some hours' manual work each day would make our artists, writers, and actors better and not worse. Æschylus was a soldier, Michael Angelo was a mason, and Professor Herkomer paints no whit the worse since he took to working as a blacksmith. What a worker William Morris

was, and yet his poetry, his drawing, and his prose romances would give pause to many a specialist who studies to keep his leisure empty and his fingers white. You don't think Mr. Gladstone injured his oratory or dulled his faculties by felling trees, do you? Nor that the author of *Lorna Doone* has vulgarised his art because of the hours he has spent in cultivating roses?

There are one or two things in *Self-Help* to which a Socialist might take exception. Thus, in his first chapter Smiles says—

Even the best institutions can give a man no active help. Perhaps the most they can do is to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition. But in all times men have been prone to believe that their happiness and well-being were to be secured by means of institutions rather than by their own conduct. Hence the value of legislation as an agent in human advancement has usually been much over-estimated. To constitute the millionth part of a legislature, by voting for one or two

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men once in three or five years, however conscientiously this duty may be performed, can exercise but little active influence upon any man's life and character. Moreover, it is every day becoming more clearly understood, that the function of government is negative and restrictive rather than positive and active ; being resolvable principally into protection—protection of life, liberty, and property. Laws, wisely administered, will secure men in the enjoyment of the fruits of their labour, whether of mind or body, at a comparatively small personal sacrifice ; but no laws, however stringent, can make the idle industrious, the thriftless provident, or the drunken sober. Such reforms can only be effected by means of individual action, economy, and self-denial ; by better habits rather than by greater rights.

Of course no Socialist can read the above passage without a smile. But, while we recognise that our author is wholly at sea, we are bound to respect his evident honesty and his equally evident desire for the truth, if only he can come by it.

Smiles is grotesquely wrong, and yet

all the while is so near the right that it is marvellous how he can keep on for so long, hammering all round about the nail without once hitting it on the head.

For instance—

All nations have been made what they are by the thinking and the working of many generations of men. Patient and persevering labourers in all ranks and conditions of life, cultivators of the soil and explorers of the mine, inventors and discoverers, manufacturers, mechanics, and artisans, poets, philosophers, and politicians, all have contributed towards the grand result, one generation building upon another's labours, and carrying them forward to still higher stages. This constant succession of noble workers, the artisans of civilisation, has served to create order out of chaos in industry, science, and art ; and the living race has thus, in the course of nature, become the inheritor of the rich estate provided by the skill and industry of our forefathers, which is placed in our hands to cultivate, and to hand down, not only unimpaired but improved, to our successors. . .

But our progress has also been owing to multitudes of smaller and less known men. Though only the generals' names may be

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remembered in the history of any great campaign, it has been in a great measure through the individual valour and heroism of the privates that victories have been won. And life, too, is "a soldier's battle," men in the ranks having in all times been among the greatest of workers. Many are the lives of men unwritten, which have nevertheless as powerfully influenced civilisation and progress as the more fortunate great whose names are recorded in biography.

Perhaps Smiles, like most authors, is at times inconsistent; perhaps he attaches more value to fame and promotion than some of us do; but *Self-Help* is a good book. I don't think Smiles does worship success for its own sake. I see no sign of it. All through his book he speaks but little of the titles, the honours, or the wealth won by his heroes. In no place that I remember does he advise the young to strive because success will win them riches or worldly eminence. But consistently he applauds industry and perseverance in the doing of useful or noble work.

He makes mistakes. He fails, or appears to fail, to detect the meanness and selfishness of Arkwright, for example. But we don't expect Samuel Smiles to be perfection. He is entitled to his fair share of faults as a man ; and, like many other men, is all the more interesting, amusing, and useful because of them.

A good man's faults are but as the vinegar in the salad, the cayenne on the oyster, the brackishness of the olive. If any reader disagrees with me, he has my leave to be as perfect as original sin and the close attention of Satan to business will permit a mere clod of wayward marl to be. And if any Socialist persists in still condemning Smiles' *Self-Help*, he may avail himself of the universal permission of the reading public to write a better book himself.

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